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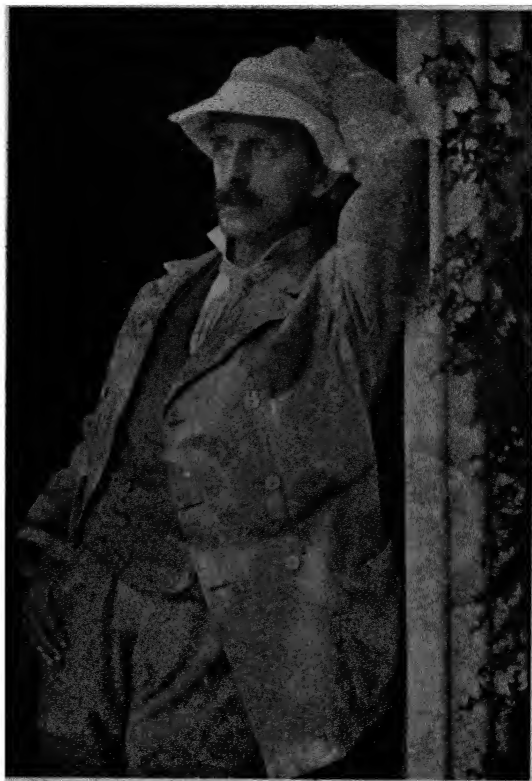
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## THE BARRIE INSPIRATION



J. M. BARRIE

A photograph taken in the early nineteen-hundreds

# THE BARRIE INSPIRATION

BY  
PATRICK CHALMERS

Author of  
*Kenneth Grahame (a Biography)*  
*Green Days and Blue Days*  
*etc., etc.*

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## CHAPTER I

KIRRIEMUIR (Kerimore, even Corrie Mohr, but most men of Angus say 'Kirrie') stands by the little splashing Garie burn almost in the shadow of the Sidlaws, almost in Clova where are the head waters of the South Esk river. It has some two or three thousand souls inhabiting there. Many people know Kirrie as being not far from Glamis Castle and a vantage wherefrom the August holiday-makers may get a glimpse of their present Majesties as they go to, or come from, the grouse shooting on the Sidlaw braes, or when they journey from Glamis to Balmoral.

Nor is Kirrie far from Cortachy. Within earshot, almost, of the tapping tabor of Cortachy's ghostly drummer, Kirrie lies within the Airlie tradition of Romance and Lost Causes.

You may ask a Kirriemarian if he ever heard tell of a famous London playwright, now no more, and he will look down his nose. He will, if he can, change the subject—to the Forfar football team maybe, even to the price of jute. Yet he knows finely to whom you refer, and is, I doubt, secretly ashamed of knowing. For he is a pious fellow and



would hold the Scriptures to be correct where they refer to the honour of prophets as in all else. But, in his way, he is proud to remember his fellow-townsmen of whom you are enquiring. I think he would be prouder still did one name the latter's fame from a cash standpoint. But, as a rule, one does not.

Kirrie possesses a fine cemetery. What is mortal of her most famous son is there. The grave-digger said of it, speaking as one without prejudice, when Sir James Barrie's ashes were brought to him at the last: 'Man, this is the grandest cemetery in Scotland, ye can see Stirling Castle fae 't.'

Kirrie is an old place. Agricola camped 'in about' Kirrie. And before Agricola, the Painted Picts brewed the Heather Ale to the song of the bees where Battledykes stands to-day. And the Romans came through Brechin to Kirrie. There are, but you will want a little belief, to be sure, traces of Agricola's smart command, barrow and ringed camping-site, by the haunted wood of Caddam. There is a legend of Caddam, borrowed from the Greek mythology, which tells how a god pursued a Greek nymph there, which was an unco' thing to happen in an Auld Licht parish.

And it was in Caddam Wood, moreover, that one Gavin Dishart, a Minister of the Word, saw the slim Egyptian, she dancing barefoot in the

moonlight, and said, instead of thanking God for her, that she was of the devil. But Gavin was to my way of thinking an impossible gouk. He was young, of course, and maybe blate. Which David the Psalmist, whose Book was in Gavin's oxtter, would not have been. Nor would, I fancy, for all his caution, the Reverend Adam Yestreen. At least, not as blate as all that.

When Agricola (realising that he must leave it to General Wade to make roads among the bens) went clanking South with his Eagles, South to the Wall, there came to Kirrie St. Columba. But Rome had destroyed the Painted People at Mons Grampius, which is, wrongly, called Grampianus. Mons is a mere hillock of 1000 foot or so, and Grampius (its modern name I do not know unless it be Mains, Anglian=farm, of Glamis) is a site, on the Isla, not far from Forfar Loch. To-day they call it 'Auld Arm Chair.'

At Mons Grampius the Pict king, a brave little creature, Calgacus by name, died bravely. At Brechin, near by, his tower stands to this day, a finer candle than was ever lit by Rome. Thus St. Columba found no Picts in Kirrie to convert, they, such as survived, having run to Glen Clova and to Glen Esk, passing, on their way to the latter, through Aberlemno and Aldbar, and leaving a rune or so to show, on carven stone, whither

they had gone. But they were back in the Kirrie neighbourhood, under Nectane, in 710. At any rate, it was at Restenneth stone that Nectane, the Pict, was baptized by St. Boniface of Cupar. The Saint was rewarded (the Church always wants something and always did) by a grant of the fishing rights of Forfar and Restenneth Lochs, which the Monks of Cupar held until 1605, when they parted with the same to Patrick, ninth Lord Glamis, for a yearly consideration, among other things, of '£4 Scots' (about 4s.) and 'sixty dozen of pikes and perches in the month of March.'

Later to Kirriemuir, to Inverquharity rather, came Donald of the Isles and his dhuinnewassals—as came Ta Phairson to Strath Canaan. Donald, at Inverquharity, killed Ogilvy of that ilk after (according to the ballad, which is probably incorrect) a week's battle—from 'Munonday in the morning' to 'Saturday at nicht.' A dowie place still is the 'den' of Inverquharity:

Aside the Quharity burn  
I ken na what I'm seein'  
Wi' the licht near deein'  
An' the lang year at the turn;  
But the dog that gangs wi' me  
Creeps whingein' at my knee,  
And we baith haud thegither  
Like a lad an' his brither  
At the water o' Quharity.

Alang the Quharity glen  
I mind on warlock faces,  
I' the still, dark places  
Whaur the trees hae airms like men;  
And I ken the beast can see  
Yon een that's watchin' me,  
Whaur the arn-boughs darken  
An' I'm owre fear'd to harken  
I' the glen o' Quharity.

But I'd sooner think of Inverquharity, and the burn of Inverquharity, and its green beech woods full of cushie doos, as a *howff* of bonnie Jean Myles. It was in the woods of Inverquharity that one, Aaron Latta (a miller, as all men know), had held Jean's hand 'aneath the shawl,' in the woods which Aaron himself afterwards recalled, with sentiment, as his mill ran clacking. For, of a truth, that beech wood is a 'bielder' bit, and the wood pigeons coo as sentimentally there as they do in Temple Gardens.

Ogilvy of Inverquharity, by Kirrie, died in 1412. Later, two hundred years later, on a sunny June Sabbath morning, Kirrie saw another sight, which was the burning of Geillis Duncan, the witch of Cortachy, by the Reverend Patrick Lyon of Glamis. Geillis was the last Scottish witch to go to the stake—a resinous, fresh-cut piece of Scotch pine, we may be sure.

And I can learn no more of Kirriemuir until William Duke of Cumberland came by on his way

to Drum Mossie, with a billet at Glamis Castle as the end of that day's march. But we know that by night a wheen right-thinking lads came from Forfar and Kirriemuir and cut the traces of his gun-carriages under the noses of the Hanoverian sentries. So there was a pretty to-do next day and much spluttering of German oaths. My Lord Strathmore had, they say, to broach a morning hogshead of claret before the Butcher was pacified at all. My lord's forebear (and the fact must have made the trace-cutting a trifle suspicious) had fallen for the Cause, in the '15, at Sheriffmuir. The Campbell's self, we are told, who commanded the Government army, is said to have seen the corpse of the Lyon lie out in the field, guarded by a single gillie of his House. Noticing the unusual fineness of the slain's apparel, Argyll enquires curtly of the watcher, 'Who will yon man be?' 'A man indeed he was—yestreen,' the retainer is said to have replied.

And now that Butcher Cumberland has ridden on to 'stamp out Romance' at Culloden upon a wild April morning, and now that the corbie crows, which the Hanoverian uproar had set wheeling and cawing, perch again in the 'amenity timber' at Glamis, I can learn nothing more of Kirrie for a long day.

But in 1797 was born, in Kirriemuir, Charles Lyell, later Sir Charles Lyell of Kinnordy, also in

Angus. Lyell was, as one knows, the geologist and the right hand of Darwin in his study of the Earth's crust. Lyell was expert in Eocene, Miocene and Pliocene, which ought to be, if musical words go for aught, three pretty Greek nymphs; but they are not. Yet Lyell is buried in the Abbey. And Lyell is a Kirriemarian. As was also the Reverend Alexander Whyte, who was born in that famous clachan ('nobody is very sure, in Scotland, what a clachan is') in 1837 and frequently as a boy (says Dr. Barbour) got a 'hurl' in among the webs of cloth which David Barrie, a weaver of Kirrie (he was weaving a big family too, and of it a lad yet to come that, in due time, they called James), would despatch by cart to 'the city.' Which city would, of course, be Dundee, what other?

Alexander Whyte was, later, to be the famous Minister of Free St. George's, Edinburgh. He was also (as was Sir Charles Lyell) an author, who, in his spare time, wrote half a dozen lengthy books of devotion, chief of which is, in three volumes, *The Bunyan Characters*.

Kirrie is no show village of cottage gardens, of roses and double daisies. It is a stunted, bleak place of wynds and drear closes, of wet pavements and mist. It looks as starved as a tinker's tyke. But it holds, even to-day, the hearts of its children:

O, the braw, braw toon o' Kirrie! What a years that  
I hae lo'ed it!

And I winna seek to leave it tho' I'm spared  
anither score;

I'd be greetin' like a laddie for the auld reid hooses  
croodit

Lookin' down upon the steadin's and the fields o'  
Strathmore.

Ye may speak o' heavenly mansions, ye may say it  
wadna grieve ye

When ye quit a world sae bonnie—but I canna jist  
be sure,

For I'll hae to wait, I'm thinkin', or I see if I believe ye,

For my first braid blink o' heaven, an' my last o'  
Kirriemuir!

On the 9th of May 1860 a new Kirriemarian came to Kirrie. There was born another son to Margaret, the wife of David Barrie, the hand-loom weaver who lived in the Brechin Road. There were more to follow (the Barrie bairns, living and dead, numbered ten), but it is the son of 1860 with whom I am concerned. He was christened James Matthew, and it is a moot point, I understand, as to whether or no you spell Matthew, as I have done, with two *ts*.

There was an elder brother, Alexander, already at Aberdeen University, taking the same subjects as another Kirrie student—Alexander Whyte already referred to. Alec Barrie was a lad of promise, and, shortly after his little brother James

arrived at home, he graduated with first-class Classic honours. Had he not died, who can say what fame he might not have brought to his name and his native town?

It seems a strange thing to the Southerner that the son of a house so poverty-stricken as that one in the Brechin Road, could be afforded a University career. Here is that 'but and ben':

'The house stood bare, without a shrub, in a garden whose paling did not go all the way round, the potato-pit being only kept out of the road, that here sets off southward, by a broken dyke of stones and earth. On each side of the slate-coloured door was a window of knotted glass. Ropes were flung over the thatch to keep the roof on in wind.'

Into this humble abode James, a son of it, has taken any one who cared to accompany him:

'But you must not come in a contemptuous mood, thinking that the poor are but a stage removed from beasts of burden, as some cruel writers of these days say; nor will I have you turn over with your foot the shabby horse-hair chairs that Leeby kept so speckless, and Hendry weaved for years to buy, and Jess so loved to look upon.

'I speak of the chairs, but if we go together into the "room" they will not be visible to you. For a long time the house has been to let. Here, on the left of the doorway, as we enter, is the room,



without a shred of furniture in it except the boards of two closed-in beds. The flooring is not steady and here and there holes have been eaten into the planks. You can scarcely stand upright beneath the decaying ceiling. Worn boards and ragged walls, and the rusty ribs fallen from the fireplace, are all that meet your eyes, but I see a round, unsteady, waxcloth-covered table, with four books lying at equal distances on it. There are six prim chairs, two of them not to be sat upon, backed against the walls, and between the window and the fireplace a chest of drawers, with a snowy coverlet. On the drawers stands a board with coloured marbles for the game of solitaire, and I have only to open the drawer with the loose handle to bring out the dambrod. In the carved wood frame over the window hangs Jamie's portrait; in the only other frame a picture of Daniel in the den of lions, sewn by Leeby in wool. Over the chimney-piece with its shells, in which the roar of the sea can be heard, are strung three rows of birds' eggs. Once again we might be expecting company to tea.

'The passage is narrow. There is a square hole between the rafters, and a ladder leading up to it. You may climb and look into the attic, as Jess liked to hear me call my tiny garret-room. I am stiffer now than in the days when I lodged with Jess during the summer holiday I am trying

to bring back, and there is no need for me to ascend. Do not laugh at the newspapers with which Leebie papered the garret, nor at the yarn Hendry stuffed into the windy holes. He did it to warm the house for Jess. But the paper must have gone to pieces and the yarn rotted decades ago.'

In reality it was no uncommon occurrence for the veriest crofter to send a son to Aberdeen, to St. Andrews or to a like seat of knowledge. The fees were practically *nil*. The student while in residence lived on less, much less, than it would cost an Etonian up at Christ Church, say, to keep a fox-terrier. Alec Barrie shared a bedroom with young Whyte, and it cost them 8s. 6d. a week—1s. 9d. each. So much for bed, and as for board, it was customary for a student to take with him from home a poke of oatmeal and a sack of potatoes—sufficient food for a Scot even though he had his 'shivering fits.' Himself his chef, on these simple mercies he was supposed to subsist (and indeed did) until vacation came. He would get a lift to, or from, Dundee on the carts that carried the webs from such Angus towns as Kirriemuir, Forfar and Brechin. The sea passage from, or to, Aberdeen was but a plack or so. And the canny lad would arrange to find his own commissariat rather than contract with the owners to feed him *en route*. He was ever too seasick to care for the plentiful boiled beef and

dumplings which came to the table whose heaving oilcloth rose and fell with so nauseating a regularity. A hard life that of a Scots student? Let's see what Alec Barrie's little brother, James, was to write of it later for the English newspapers:

'I knew three undergraduates who lodged together in a dreary house at the top of a dreary street, two of whom used to study until two in the morning, while the third slept. When they shut up their books they woke Number 3, who arose, dressed, and studied till breakfast-time. Among the many advantages of this arrangement the chief was that, as they were dreadfully poor, one bed did for the three. Two of them occupied it at one time, and the third at another. Terrible position? Frightful destitution? Not a bit of it. The Millennium was in those days. If life was at the top of a hundred steps, if students occasionally died of hunger and hard work combined, if the midnight oil only burned to show a ghastly face, "weary and worn," if lodgings were cheap and dirty, and dinners few and far between, life was still real and earnest and, in many cases, it did not turn out an empty dream.'

But Alec Barrie was not, as I've said, spared to his parents. And his mother, if we may regard Margaret Ogilvy as such, mourning him, never forgot, as we know.

‘She lived twenty-nine years after his death, such active years until toward the end, that you never knew where she was unless you took hold of her, and though she was frail henceforth and ever growing frailer, her housekeeping again became famous, so that brides called as a matter of course to watch her ca’ming and sanding and stitching: there are old people still, one or two, to tell, with wonder in their eyes, how she could bake twenty-four bannocks in the hour, and not a chip in one of them. And how many she gave away, how much she gave away of all she had, and what pretty ways she had of giving it! Her face beamed and rippled with mirth as before, and her laugh, that I had tried so hard to force, came running home again. I have heard no such laugh as hers save from merry children; the laughter of most of us ages, and wears out with the body, but hers remained gleeful to the last, as if it were born afresh every morning. There was always something of the child in her, and her laugh was its voice, as eloquent of the past to me as was the christening robe to her. But I had not made her forget the bit of her that was dead; in those nine-and-twenty years he was not removed one day farther from her. Many a time she fell asleep speaking to him, and even while she slept her lips moved and she smiled as if he had come back to her, and when she woke he might vanish

so suddenly that she started up bewildered and looked about her, and then said slowly, "My David's dead!" Or perhaps he remained long enough to whisper why he must leave her now, and then she lay silent with filmy eyes. When I became a man and he was still a boy of thirteen, I wrote a little paper called "Dead this Twenty Years," which was about a similar tragedy in another woman's life, and it is the only thing I have written that she never spoke about, not even to that daughter she loved best. No one ever spoke of it to her, or asked her if she had read it; one does not ask a mother if she knows that there is a little coffin in the house.'

I am always a little uncertain about the name—Margaret Ogilvy—for the character to whom it has been so justly given. For was it not her name by right of birth? To an Angus man Margaret Ogilvy is the gay lady whom 'that fox,' the Cardinal Beaton, maintained at Melgund Castle near by Forfar town. The Margaret of Melgund was aristocrat, a tall, slim, elegant wanton with a temper of her own—or her portraits belie her. You may see her initials, M. O., woven in chaste filigree to this day above the tremendous chimney-places where the jackdaws nest and the primroses grow and the little ruined tower stands cocking, its lee lone, among open arable, peewits and stone dykes. It was straight from the arms of Margaret

Ogilvy that his Eminence rode to St. Andrews on the eve of the day he met his doom on Melvel's rapier in his castle at St. Andrews. 'Fy, fy, I am a priest,' so Beaton reproved his murderers. But he had done better to have remembered that at Melgund.

And 'Margaret Ogilvy,' to me, means the handsome shrew who was chatelaine of Melgund, of whom Margaret Ogilvy of Kirrie, had she ever heard of her, would have disapproved.

If you would look at Margaret Barrie, that is an easy matter. Her son's room-mate at Aberdeen, the Reverend Dr. Alexander Whyte, of the kirk called Free St. George's in Edinburgh, has called her, in a flight of rippling adjective, 'a dear, little, sweet, gracious, humorous, tender-hearted soul.' One may find her in her own book, *Margaret Ogilvy*, spread, as honey, over two hundred pages; you may find her as invalid Jess in *A Window in Thrums*—Jess that got 'in a present' the cloak with beads—the 'eleven and a bit'; Jess that had a hand for a bannock and a skill for the sewing, accomplishments befitting the mother of ten, she, poor soul, who had 'a terrible lot to be thankful for.'

And you may meet Margaret Barrie again, as Mrs. Margaret Dishart, 'an old woman and she but forty-three.' But how she got on with her daughter-in-law when her son, Gavin, the little

Minister, married the Egyptian, I cannot say. (I would rather call the potential *Lady Rintoul* thus than the so milk-and-water *Babbie*—but it ought to have been the good Angus Barbara-in-the-diminutive, *Barbie*, surely?)

But if I wanted to find Margaret Barrie for myself, to build her on the foundation of Dr. Whyte, who saw her, doubtless, from a viewpoint detached and impossible to her son, I think that (were I able to call the latter into involuntary consultation) I should find as good a portrait of Margaret as any existing in Wendy Moira Angela Darling, she who is, so I make bold to imagine (helped by a dedication of herself and her friends), a lass of Angus. A lass of Angus—*ille terrarum*, 'that native place which is dearest on earth to me.' Yet, I may say that Wendy was christened for a maid of Edinburgh, 'one of the loveliest little girls.' She was the daughter of W. E. Henley, and 'Wendy' (wrote James Barrie) was the nearest she could attain to 'calling me Friend.' One may possibly imagine Margaret as her son's lucky star, a Tinker Bell who plays in and out of the printed page.

Of David Barrie, the husband of Margaret and the father of James Matthew, we know that he was, by trade, a hand-loom weaver. Mr. John Kennedy writes of him as a man of sterling character, a good churchman and a Chartist. Dr.

Margel-Opilov

Introduction

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First page of the MS. of ' Margaret Ogilvy ' (1896);  
written with the right hand





Alexander Whyte has employed fewer adjectives to David's making than to that of David's wife, but he says that David Barrie was the 'most saintly' man that ever he knew. And the opinion of the Minister of Free St. George's ought to be a good opinion. David Barrie himself, asked by a fine Edinburgh lady visiting in Kirrie (she sat under the Reverend Alexander) as to the truth of the story that her pastor had in his younger days been a sutar (shoemaker) in Kirriemuir, replied reprovngly, 'Ay, mem, an' a right bad sutar was he, but I'm tell't that he's a fine preacher in Edinburgh where there's many that are sair needin' his ministration.'

James Barrie has written of his pride, in his father and of his admiration for his qualities. And Hendry McQumpha (of *A Window in Thrums*) is the shadow of the man himself—an excellent, hen-pecked, generous soul, with the patience of a cuddy. Some folk in Thrums would have called him *sumph*, but his son revered him.

I may say that 'Thrums,' the famous pen-name of Kirrie, is a technicality of the loom. It is the fringe, the odd-and-end of threads, left on the loom's frame when the weaver has removed his finished web. These thrums are 'overs,' and a Kirrie weaver, keeping them to his hand, would (a thread breaking on the loom) with a thrum splice the broken ends and make them one again.

And a weaver would put thrums to many uses, to tie up a parcel, to 'sort' his broken braces, to fasten his breeks about his knee. So may a writer use this and that to bind weft and warp of words with.

But thrums, grey and dusty odds and ends, have come to mean dreams—in the Scots nursery rhymes at least:

The dog's spledered on the floor  
Dreamin' grey thrums.

Again:

Hey, Willie Winkie,  
The wean's in a creel,  
Wamblin' aff a body's knee  
Like a very eel;  
Ruggin' at the cat's lug  
Spoilin' a' her thrums,  
Hey, Willie Winkie,  
See, there he comes!

But you will see no thrums to-day in Kirriemuir, nor in Brechin, nor yet in Forfar, save such dust of thrums as powders the bareheaded lassies' locks who come out, a hundred at a time, of the gaunt mills on the brae-faces.

We have so many friends who were of the Angus hand-weavers of old, Hendry McQuumph and many another Auld Licht idyllist, that it may be worth while to see what like a calling was theirs. It was a back-breaking job and it made a body old before his time. But one reads (in *Margaret Ogilvy*,

is it not?) that steam has to-day brought straight backs to the lads and lassies of Kirriemuir. The one advantage that hand-weaving had (machinery has done away with it) was that it enabled a man to be his own master. We may be assured of this if we consult contemporary authorities on the hand-loomers, those spinners and weavers of old, of whom we know so much and so little.

This spinning and weaving of theirs was, in its inception, a sort of 'catch-crop.' The families of Angus, and elsewhere in Scotland, who are so generally spoken of as the weavers, were, as a rule, crofters, the small tenantry of great landed estates. The croft was a white-harled but-and-ben; there was grazing, sometimes, for a single cow, and an arable extent of three poverty-stricken acres whereon meagre oats and attenuated 'neeps' grew among out-crops of granite and whinny muir. The small fields were divided by rabbit-riddled, tumbledown stone dykes. The spinning-wheels of the gude-wife and daughters of the house eked out the harvest of the land. Equally the harvest of the sea, for the fisher-folk along the east coast were also of the weaving persuasion, the women, as their crofter cousins, weaving the yarn for the weekly market.

By the light of day the wheels flew round, and at night, by the glim of the 'cruizey,' they were still turning. We get a glimpse of the custom

in the old lilt, 'There's nae luck aboot the hoose,' when the gude-wife, hearing that the brown lug-sails of the herring fleet, that of her man's boat among them, are even now beating into the harbour of Ferry Den, asks her informant:

And are ye sure the news is true?

And are ye sure he's weel?

Is this the time to think o' wark?

Ye jades, fling by your wheel!

Is this the time to think o' wark

An' Colin at the door—

Many homes raised a big family of bairns on the productions of the loom. When steam came to 'ca' the wheel' hand-spinning became a back number and the crofter, moving with the times, became a mill-hand, the croft he had tilled providing in itself no livelihood under the changed conditions. It is steam, I think, as greatly as the coming of the sheep-walk and the deer-forest, which has emptied the Highland crofts. But communal weaving was in being before steam brought the factories. A family would discover that there was more plenty in the looms than in the plough. Therefore, letting sickle, scythe and plough go hang, man, woman and child would get to treadle and shuttle. Even in the smallest house there might be so many as half a dozen hand-looms playing clitterty-clatterty from dawn till long after dark.

And yet with these laborious days the wages were the most diminutive. At their best the average daily wage of a weaver was rarely more than 1s. 4d. That of a spinner was 1s. Those were the times of large families, but every child, as soon as he or she could work, which was at about six years old, was a wage-earner in some small degree. I have heard of a weaver in Brechin who for a wager wove a 'wab' of 100 yards in nineteen consecutive hours. And apart from the bet, which was a bottle of whisky, all he earned by his effort was the sum of 9s. 4d.

One supposes that the toiler was able to continue his almost mechanical task in a sort of trance? We know that the warlock, Tod Lapraik, continued to ca' the loom while in those dwams of his which eventually earned him that silver tester 'in the puddock's heart of him.'

The weekly wage of a skilled weaver was, at the very highest, 14s. Each child of the house was looked upon as good for an income of 5s. per week. And it was wages of this sort that not only raised large families but that sent a son of the house to Aberdeen University or to wear the red gown of St. Andrews. Of course in those old days a man's earnings went a deal further than now. Luxuries were fewer. Such a luxury as tea was unknown among the poor at the beginning of the nineteenth century. When

James Barrie's parents married I understand that but two houses in Kirriemuir kept tea-pots. I am told that their owners 'took tea' by throwing the cheerful brew away and spreading the stewed leaves for a relish upon 'a piece.' Oatmeal-porridge and brose made the weavers' ordinary fare. Yet for all the penury the burns were full of excellent trout and, though 'staik' (or butcher's meat) was an almost unheard of dainty, the Game Laws, in Angus, as regards rabbits and hill-hares at least, were not as rigorously enforced as to-day. Most houses, moreover, however humble, possessed a bit of a kail-yard wherein (your Scot is ever a delving son of Adam) grew, forby the kail and tatties, 'grossets,' 'rasps' and currants. A 'skep' or so of bees provided honey and (as Margaret Ogilvy) most gude-wives prided themselves on their hand for scones and bannocks.

The final step to factory centralisation was, perhaps, the loom-shop, which, owned by an enterprising body who called himself a manufacturer, employed as many as twenty noisy looms for ever running through the dusty hours, for ever filling the air with the 'stour' of thrums.

But we must not take Stevenson's Tod Lapraik as a sample of the weaver. The nineteenth-century weaver had all the finer characteristics of the humble Scot. He was thrifty and often sternly God-fearing. He owned his loom and was

responsible for its output to himself alone. He was, it is true, somewhat at the mercy of the canny Dundonian who purchased his 'wabs,' yet he, throughout, retained a sturdy independence of his own. He was shrewd and narrow and ready to argue with any man on any matter concerning Church or State. Mr. Kennedy, in his *Thrums and the Barrie Country*, repeats a story, related to him by a minister, of the old weaving days which is typical of the weaver's pious mentality. This good man at the beginning of his ministry called upon one of his flock—a hand-loom weaver:

'I'm real glad to see you, minister,' the old man said, 'for I'm sair needin' your help. I've been debatin' in my mind a' day what was the precise point o' the freedom o' the will that was affected by the Fall?'

Take away, says the writer, the theological setting of that question, archaic now but fresh and fertile then, alter it to a simple query such as this, 'How far is man free?' and you will see something of the discursive soul of the old-time weaver.

It was to such fine independence as is above pictured, such crushing toil and poverty as what's here, that James Barrie was born in, as I have said, 1860. He was baptized, no doubt, within the fortnight of his arrival, for among the



wives (Margaret Barrie among them, I'm sure) of Kirriemuir 'she was esteemed a poor body whose infant did not see the inside of the kirk within a fortnight of its birth. Forty years ago it was an accepted superstition in Thrums that the ghosts of children who had died before they were baptized went wailing and wringing their hands round the kirkyard at nights, and that they would continue to do this until the crack of doom. When the Auld Licht children grew bigger, too, they crowed over those of their fellows whose christening had been deferred until a comparatively late date, and the mothers who had needlessly missed a Sabbath for long afterwards hung their heads.'

The christening of little James Matthew was at the South Free Kirk, and though the christened naturally remembers nothing of the proceedings—indeed, he has said that he, as other little boys, remembers nothing at all of his first five years—yet he has described the proceedings at the 'poopit-fit' as, no doubt, they actually occurred. He wore the robe that his brother had worn. Indeed 'we had all been christened in it, from the oldest of the family to the youngest, between whom stood twenty years.' Mrs. Barrie had, it would have been said, I'm sure, 'an awfu' notion' of that robe. With a sentiment which weakens her fine character, but which is typical of her kind

and time, she had asked for it on hearing of her eldest son's death: 'She looked long at it and then turned her face to the wall.' The robe was the one of Margaret's bairns 'that never grew up.'

'Hundreds of other children were christened in it also, such robes being then a rare possession, and the lending of ours among my mother's glories. It was carried carefully from house to house, as if it were itself a child; my mother made much of it, smoothed it out, petted it, smiled to it before putting it into the arms of those to whom it was being lent; she was in our pew to see it borne magnificently (something inside it now) down the aisle to the pulpit-side, when a stir of expectancy went through the church and we kicked each other's feet beneath the book-board but were reverent in the face; and however the child might behave, laughing brazenly or skirling to its mother's shame, and whatever the father as he held it up might do, look doited probably and bow at the wrong time, the christening robe of long experience helped them through. And when it was brought back to her she took it in her arms as softly as if it might be asleep, and unconsciously pressed it to her breast: there was never anything in the house that spoke to her quite so eloquently as that little white robe; it was the one of her children that always remained a baby. And she had not made it herself, which

was the most wonderful thing about it to me, for she seemed to have made all other things.'

The 'Lichts,' of which one hears so much, were seceders from the Established. The Auld Kirk arose out of a breakaway from the Established Kirk, headed by Ebenezer Erskine, in 1733. The question in dispute was whether or no a congregation had the right to nominate its own minister. This settled, a new dispute arose among the rebels on the text of the National Covenants. The more radical party declared itself to be the New Lichts. Those who adhered to a literal interpretation of the Statute became, rather obviously, the Auld Lichts. Their position, writes Mr. Kennedy, was illogical, 'but it represented no trifling with fundamentals.'

The church, the South Free, which the Barries attended, and where the pious sucked peppermints as the cow chews the cud, was of later origin. It was a satellite of Establishment which followed the Reverend Daniel Cormick of Kirriemuir on a question of patronage. Among Mr. Cormick's adherents were David and Margaret Barrie. Then what, and why, so much Auld Lichts and their idylls? Why, Margaret Ogilvy was born an Auld Licht. Her father, a stonemason, was prominent among the latter. But Margaret 'went over' when she married David. But one fancies that, though she bowed down in

the House of Rimmon, her heart, steadfast in loyalty, was across the way. Anyway she remembered, and when, thirty years after, her son, in Fleet Street, wrote plaguing her for Auld Licht copy, she was able to supply it:

‘Now my mother might have been discovered, in answer to certain excited letters, flinging the bundle of undarned socks from her lap and “going in for literature”; she was racking her brains, by request, for memories I might convert into articles, and they came to me in letters which she dictated to my sisters. How well I could hear her sayings between the lines: “But the editor-man will never understand that, it’s perfect blethers” —“By this post it must go, I tell you; we must take the editor when he’s hungry—we canna be blamed for it, can we? He prints them of his free will, so the wite is his”—“But I’m near terrified—if London folk reads them we’re done for.” And I was sounded as to the advisability of sending him a present of a lippie of shortbread, which was to be her crafty way of getting round him. By this time, though my mother and I were hundreds of miles apart, you may picture us waving our hands to each other across country, and shouting, “Hurrah!” You may also picture the editor in his office thinking he was behaving like a shrewd man of business, and unconscious that up in the north there was an elderly lady

chuckling so much at him that she could scarcely scrape the potatoes.'

And therefore, rightly or wrongly, I consider James Barrie to have been, on the distaff side anyhow, as good, if not as typical, an Auld Licht as any.

Could Margaret have foreseen that her babe was doomed to damnation in the second degree it would have grieved her sorely. For in the Auld Licht kirk there were three degrees of damnation — 'auld kirk, play-acting, chapel.' The only pleasant thing that Thrums knew of chapel, *i.e.* the (local) Church of England, was 'that its steeple once fell.' It was considered an act of grace and humour in Kirrie did you take a 'divot,' a square of turf, and drop it down the chimney of the English divine, whose lum would thereupon smoke as Tophet.

And yet the Kirriemarians, as their principal exponent shows them, do not sound playful:

'You could generally tell an Auld Licht in Thrums when you passed him, his dull vacant face wrinkled over a heavy wob. He wore tags of yarn round his trousers beneath the knee, that looked like ostentatious garters, and frequently his jacket of corduroy was put on beneath his waistcoat. If he was too old to carry his load on his back, he wheeled it on a creaking barrow, and when he met a friend they said, "Ay, Jeames,"

and "Ay, Davit," and then could think of nothing else.'

It is well for the London Stage and for English letters that the 'Jeames' Barrie, newly christened, was to have more to say for himself than just that.

## CHAPTER II

JAMES BARRIE has now been both born and christened. We have seen that he remembers nothing of his early years. But he would have been much as any barefoot bairn of the time. He would have played the games of his equals, 'counting out,' let's say, to

Zeenty teenty, halligo lum,  
Pitchin' tawties doon the lum,  
Wha's there? Johnnie Blair.  
What d'ye want? A bottle o' beer.  
Where's your money? In my purse.  
Where's your purse? In my pocket.  
Where's your pocket? I forgot it.  
You—gang—out.

or to the more simple

Easie-osie, mannie's nosie,  
Easie-osie, oot!

And, maybe,

I durket him, I *durket* him,

or

Bee, baw, babbity.

And you may fancy that James Barrie and his friends were among the last of the bairns of old, the players of such plays as I have named. For,

to-day, I never see such fine doings, nor even the entirely local

I see something an' sanna tell,  
A' the dogs o' Kirriemuir canna ring the bell.

But to the child himself the first five years of the 'sixties was a season of mists. Maybe the boy who lived those years lived in some *heure bleue*, some initiation of his own which he was to forget in much the manner in which the initiation of *Peter*, forty years afterwards, was, I read, equally forgotten? But this is moonshine, for few small boys can remember of early childhood aught that's worth recalling.

Yet one wonders why *Peter* was christened Pan by a begetter who goes, in his ordinary, as little to the Greek tradition as he does to any tradition but to his own?

I have read an Angus sermon (the MS. of it is by me now) which was delivered seventy years before James Barrie was born. The preacher, a namesake of my own, rebukes by innuendo rather than by any pulpit fisticuffs a belief in the fairy-tales of Hellas which it would seem had been taught to the young by an English dominie who held office among the Grampian foothills. It may be that some thin pandean echo of the heathen rumour which the discourse scourges had fallen unawares upon untilled but fruitful ground in a



land which, as the preacher truly said, is not unlike the Arcady of the Golden Age?

But no Angus sermon worth hearing should be written down and read. Was it not Margaret, or one like her, who pronounced judgment: 'Well, I had just the three fauts to his discourse; it was read, it wasna' weel read, and it wasna' worth readin'.'

But, once more, this is all moonshine and not at all for the consideration of the serious.

It is clear that the period of forgetfulness came to an end about 1866, because in that year *Tommy Sandys* came to the Dovecote, 'a prim little house standing back from the steepest brae in Thrums,' the seminary for infants whose proprietors were the Misses Ailie and Kitty Cray. In reality, the ladies who received the youthful James Barrie were the genteel Misses Adam, daughters of a retired cleric, lately come to live in Bank Street, Kirriemuir, who would help to keep the parental pittance going by taking a pupil or so and learning him his letters and his words of one syllable. Just how much *Sentimental Tommy* has idealised these two ladies I would not care to guess. But I understand them to have been adepts at knuckle-knocking with a ruler (to which the tawse is a joke), and ready at any moment to incarcerate the misbehaving in the coal-cellar. I do not think that either of the Misses Adam

practised 'A Mother's Method' as practised by Miss Ailie Cray.

But it is possible that in Bank Street Master Barrie learned, as *Tommy* did at the Dovecote, not only his A B C and his easy reading (did Tommy not dip into some of Miss Ailie's *novelles*?) but how to play smuggle-bools and pilly. And, as *Tommy* too, he maybe learned (from the *novelles*) what the word sometimes printed 'D—n' means.

Thrums was, in its early way, a high-brow centre, with a lending library whose subscribers numbered twenty, of whom the Misses Adam, as befitted their calling and social position, made two. It will be recalled how the shamefaced Miss Ailie Cray brought home, one day, a book of dubious title, it hidden 'under her rokelay.' This over-frivolous work was called *I Love my Love with an A*, and the borrower, she being Miss Ailie (or Miss Adam), was filled with delightful alarm:

'The hero had such a way with him and was so young (Miss Ailie could not stand them a day more than twenty) that the school-mistress was enraptured and scared at every page, but she fondly hoped that Tommy did not understand. However, he discovered one day what something printed thus, "D—n," meant, and he immediately said the word with such unction that Miss Ailie let fall her knitting.'

On the whole, the Kirriemarians, prior to young James Barrie's time, had provided their native place pretty well, considering the size of it, with the means of education. In 1784 a Mr. Hendry 'of London' left £1400 to his native Kirriemuir, the interest of which was to be laid out (it must have gone a longish way) in educating and 'furnishing the boys of the parochieen with school bukes, penners, ink and paper.' And in 1829 Mr. Johnny Webster, Kirriemarian, left the lordly sum of £8000 for a similar purpose, but with special reference to the 'arts and sciences.'

When the Misses Adam had done their best for their future romanticist, James was 'flitted' to the Free Kirk Academy, to be instructed further in the elements. He was, I see, 'a lively little sprite.' There is a very pleasant photograph of James at this time. He is recognisable even now as one of a group of blue-bonneted boys commanded by two hirsute ushers (Black Cathro makes one of the two, surely?) in 'lum' hats. And all, with the exception of the *gash*-looking latter, seem to be 'lively little sprites.'

But whether James had a hand in the 'chickie mailie' joke played on the Painted Lady, or if indeed there ever *was* a Painted Lady either in Thrums or Tilliedrum, I cannot say. I hope not, for the jest seems singularly poor. Mr. Robb of Kirriemuir remembers how 'chickie mailie' is

played, however, and remembers that young James Barrie was no poor hand thereat. A bone button is attached to a foot or two of string. The string is attached to a pin. The pin, under cover of dark, is inserted in the sash of a window. A longer string (the length, I see, depends on one's personal courage) is attached to the short one, and the chickie-mailer, 'hunkering' afar, or anear, pulls the former cord. Thereupon the 'button taps the death-rap on the window' and the Painted Lady screams.

Mr. Kennedy repeats another 'bit of string' story, a more justifiable bit of spriteliness than the *flegging* of a lone lady. I quote him:

'One evening in the gloaming a worthy bailie of Kirriemuir wended his way homewards along the Brechin Road. In the centre of the road he saw a parcel. Like a good citizen, he picked it up and carefully examined it. Then he tucked it under his arm and proceeded on his way. He had not gone far, however, when it was jerked from his arm by some unseen power. The string which did the trick was in the hands of—Peter Pan.'

But whatever youthful and local games kept young James from 'languour' (as we mean that word in Angus), he was original, for a Scot, in possessing an inborn love of cricket. Certainly Angus may be said to be the home of Scottish cricket, but the fashion for it was set, just about

James Barrie's first birthday, by the great houses of Kinnaird and Glamis. There exists an excellent book, *The Annals of Brechin Cricket*, which gives the genesis of the game in the county with quaint emphases and genuine enthusiasms.

I read, not of a batsman being out, but of his getting 'peremptory notice to quit.' I read how 'an *astonisher* shivered Sir James Baird's timbers after he had booked but seven brace and a half.' I read how Lord Strathmore 'settled Roger's hash with a tearer.' I read how 'a crasher from his Lordship played Harry with Lee's woods.' But we may be sure that my Lord Rintoul was not among these titled performers. Angus has a peer to every square mile, and none is the counterpart of this much abused and rather poorly drawn nobleman. But Rintoul 'was a peer and those were my politics,' as James Barrie said when he, a student of Edinburgh, threw (no doubt fictionally) a divot at Lord Rosebery.

But I read nothing, in the *Annals*, of a Kirriemarian team or of J. M. Barrie. Yet the Captain of the Allahakbarrie C.C. must have seen some of these great doings (he may even have seen the historic match when the Glamis Castle XI was beaten by Brechin, and by one run), or how could he say, 'cricket has been my joy since I first saw it played in infancy by valiant performers in my native parts'?

That the boy played cricket at Kirrie we know; how else could the man have known that the Hill of Kirriemuir, dour, uninviting, solitary, is the 'finest cricket pitch in the world'? He, I am told, in after years, built a pavilion upon that hill where once was none. The centuries, the quarter centuries more likely, were knocked up on a spliceless willow or beech or fir. One trundled one's 'astonishers' with any sort of a ball. The 'woods' were, as like as not, a flat boulder set up on end. Flannels, I read, were unknown, and the jacket worn inside out distinguished fieldsman from spectator.

This love of bat and ball, this holding sacred a game of the English, marks the young James as an original and a pioneer among his people, for the love of motley and of travelling shows, which were his, is common to all boyhood.

In *Walker, London*, young Andrew McPhail (off) is promised 'a cane-handled bat' if he can run the mile in six minutes. Such a possession must have seemed, on the Hill of Kirriemuir, a passport to Paradise, or to Lord's. Thus may the youthful violinist, he with the true music in his soul, dream of owning a Strad of the right Cremona kind.

It seems that here, I, having mentioned cricket, must jump forty years on and quote a part of what has been set down in the *Memoir of James*

*Anon*<sup>1</sup> concerning the Allahakbarrie Cricket Club. I wish I might have space to tell how the Club's Captain, 'an idle spectator beneath a cherry tree,' watched a match between a ladies' school and eleven young women of the neighbourhood. The picture was a pretty one, no doubt, a summer pattern of happy maidens flitting and darting in cool print and flannel, 'the field vocal with them.' I wish that we might all see it, all hear the thrush-like voices. But this of the Club, by James Anon, I am able to quote:

'Cricket had been my joy since I first saw it played in infancy by valiant performers in my native parts, and Anon was not long in London before he found his way to Lord's. The most charming sight he saw there was at an Eton and Harrow match. Among the dense crowd moving slowly round the ground stood a babe, an Etonian "scug," more properly attired than any other mortal may hope to be, but a-weary and asleep. In this sleep he stood, buffeted this way and that, but tile, socks, rosette, cane hooked on arm and all continued to function correctly—the perfect little gentleman.

'In those days you could sit on the sward and watch the play as at a country match, but now I am such a swell that I look on from the little hotel on the left as you go in. We have got to know

<sup>1</sup> i.e. *The Greenwood Hat*.

each other there, and I call the attendant, I buy the ticket from George. Anon went alone to Lord's at first and did not dare speak to any one, but by his second year he was accompanied by friends, such as Gilmour and Marriott Watson with whom Anon afterwards wrote a play. Sometimes the three of them went for long tramps in Surrey, oftenmost to lovely Shere, in which village, "over the butcher's shop," Meredith told me he had written one of his novels. On these occasions they talked so much of cricket that it began to be felt among them that they were hidden adepts at the game, and an ambition came over them to unveil. This was strengthened by the elderly appearance of the Shere team, whom they decided to challenge after letting them grow one year older. Anon was appointed captain (by chicanery it is said by the survivors), and he thought there would be no difficulty in getting a stout XI together, literary men being such authorities on the willow. On the eventful day, however, he found out in the railway compartment by which they advanced upon Shere that he had to coach more than one of his players in the finesse of the game: which was the side of the bat you hit with, for instance. In so far as was feasible they also practised in the train. Two of the team were African travellers of renown, Paul du Chaillu of gorilla fame and the much loved Joseph Thomson of Masailand. When a name



for the team was being discussed, Anon, now grown despondent, asked these two what was the "African" for "Heaven help us," and they gave him "Allahakbar." So they decided to call themselves the Allahakbars, afterwards changed, with complimentary intention, to the Allahakbarries.

'The Allahakbarries played a few matches yearly for several summers, that first one being the most ignominious. On the glorious hill-top of Albury where they were overwhelmed that day by Shere, Anon rashly allowed practice bowling, and one of the first balls sent down (by Bernard Partridge) loosened two teeth in the head of the prospective wicket-keeper, who was thus debarred from taking any further part in the game. Anon won the toss, to the indignation of his side, until they learned that this did not necessitate their going in first, and indeed he took the field to teach the Allahakbarries the game, first telling them what to do when the umpire said "Over." Unfortunately Shere had a horribly competent left-hander who at once set about smiting the bowling, and, as this entailed constant changes in the field besides those ordered by the umpires, the less gifted of the Allahakbarries decided that their captain knew no more about the rules than themselves. There were many painful incidents, among them the conduct of

du Chaillu, who stole away every few minutes and had to be pursued and brought back into custody.

‘It is immaterial now how many runs Shere made, but the score was a goodly one, and Partidge could do nothing to the teeth of any of them. At last, however, they were out, and the once long looked-for time arrived for the Allahakbarries to go in. There was no longer a thirsty desire on the part of any of the team to open the innings, but in its place a passionate determination that this honour should be the captain’s. I forget whether he yielded to the general wish, but at all events he ordered Marriott Watson to be No. 2, because all the time they were in the train, when others trembled, Marriott had kept saying gamely, “Intellect always tells in the end.” For a lovely moment we thought it was to tell here, for he hit his first ball so hard that the Allahakbarries were at the beginning of a volley of cheers when they saw him coming out, caught at point by the curate. The captain amassed two. One man who partnered him was somewhat pedantic, and before taking centre (as they were all instructed to do) signed to Anon that he had a secret to confide. It proved to be “Should I strike the ball to however small an extent I shall run with considerable velocity.” He did not have to run. The top scorer (as he tells to this day)

was Gilmour, who swears he made five. The total was eleven.

‘The next time the Allahakbarries played Shere they won because they arrived two men short. They scoured the country in a wagonette, seeking to complete their team, and took with them, despite his protests, an artist whom they found in a field painting cows. They were still more fortunate in finding a soldier sitting with two ladies outside a pub. He agreed to accompany them if they would take the ladies also, and all three were taken. This unknown was the Allahakbarrie who carried the team that day to victory, and the last they saw of him he was sitting outside another pub with another two ladies.

‘Soon it became clear to Anon that the more distinguished as authors his men were the worse they played. Conan Doyle was the chief exception to this depressing rule, but, after all, others did occasionally have their day, as when A. E. W. Mason, fast bowler, “ran through” the opposing side, though one never knew in advance whether he was more likely to send the bails flying or to hit square leg in the stomach. Augustine Birrell once hit so hard that he smashed the bat of Anon, which had been kindly lent him, and instead of grieving he called out gloriously, “Fetch me some more bats.” Maurice Hewlett could sometimes look well set just before he came out. E. V. Lucas

had (unfortunately) a style. Will Meredith would have excelled in the long field but for his way of shouting "Boundary" when a fast ball approached him. Owen Seaman knew (or so he said) how to cut. Henry Ford was, even more than Tate, an unlucky bowler. Jerome once made two fours. Charles Whibley threw in unerringly but in the wrong direction. You should have seen Charles Furze as wicket-keeper, but you would have had to be quick about it as Anon had so soon to try some one else. Gilmour could at least continue to prate about his five. The team had no tail, that is to say, they would have done just as well had they begun at the other end. Yet when strengthened in the weaker points of their armour, namely in batting and bowling, by outsiders surreptitiously introduced, they occasionally astounded the tented field, as when by mistake they challenged Esher, a club of renown, and beat them by hundreds; an Allahakbarrie (whose literary qualifications I cannot remember) notching a century. Anon never would play Esher again, though they begged him to do so almost on bended knee.

'Rivalry ran at its noblest when the Allahakbarries had their bouts with Broadway in Worcestershire, the scene of contests and suppers of Homeric splendour, at which fair ladies looked sympathetic as their heroes told of their deeds of

long ago, including Gilmour's five. It was on such an occasion that Anon presented them with their Blues while Broadway's rafters rang. A. F. de Navarro and Turley Smith, both well-beloved, were the nominal captains of Broadway, but behind them stood the far more threatening figure of Worcestershire's loveliest resident, Madame de Navarro, the famous Mary Anderson. Turley cared little which side won, nor did we, but far otherwise was it with that implacable one, who never (such is the glory of woman) could follow the game, despite deep study, and always called it "crickets." She had however a powerful way of wandering round the field with the Allahakbarrie's top scorer, who when he came back would tell Anon sheepishly that he had promised to play for her in the second innings.

'Anon twice made little books about the "Broadway Week," the first consisting of four pages, but the second was swollen to thirty, just as Wisden grows and grows. They were privately printed in tiny editions, and are rareties now, for most of them have gone for ever with the sound of the Allahakbarrie bat and ball. The first proudly acclaimed its vice-presidents,

BEAU AUSTIN, ESQ.

TERENCE MULVANEY, ESQ.

OLD MEL, ESQ.

SERGEANT TROY, ESQ.

‘Of the creators of these officials only one was himself a cricketer, Mr. Meredith, and by his request Anon used to send him telegraphic communications about the state of the game, as he said he could not wait till morning. The second booklet was adorned with sketches, “Broadway on a Match Day,” by Lindsay M‘Arthur, in which not a dog or chicken shows, all live things being at the match; “The Two Captains,” by Herman Herkomer, in which Madame de Navarro has just bowled Anon neck and crop; “An Indispensable Part of their Luggage,” by E. T. Reed (a crate of ducks); Henry Ford’s idea of “How Partridge Sleeps Now” (in pads); and “A Dream of Alfred Parsons by Himself” (in which he gets his hundred). There are also photographs, one of Birrell and Gilmour being compelled to go in first (at the end of a rope), and another, still more sinister, of Anon preparing a spot to suit his bowling. In the letterpress no member of the team escapes Anon’s censure, and the whole (“Dedicated to our dear enemy, Mary de Navarro”) ends with Owen Seaman’s “Ode to Himself on Making the Winning Hit”:

Bloody the battle, and the sun was hot,  
When on our ranks there fell an awful rot,  
One bearded warrior, playing like a Blue,  
Had made a prehistoric swipe for two,

When three, his fellows, noted for their pluck,  
Through inadvertence got a paltry duck.  
Upon the war-path, which was far from flat,  
The foemen's champion had secured a hat,  
And one might hear the dropping of a pin  
When you, heroic sailor-soul, walked in.  
Virgin, and chosen for your facial oddity,  
In you your captain found a rare commodity,  
Omitting not what other men omitted,  
You went to make the winning hit and hit it.

‘Despite the picture of her capturing the Allahakbarrie captain’s wicket, let it be put on record that Madame de Navarro herself never wielded the willow. She, however, watched avidly every ball sent down, and it is remembered how, in a certain single-innings match, when Anon said to her that she need watch no more as his side had already passed the Broadway score, she replied hopefully, “Yes, but you have still several men to go in.” In the photograph of our Rosalind she is not inditing couplets to Orlando, but obviously drawing up a score for Anon’s discomfiture. In their love for her the Allahakbarries tried to let her side win, but we were so accomplished it could not be done. I take back all my aspersions on the team, I remember now that we always won. The Allahakbarries were invincible.’

Later still, much later, James Anon, or James Barrie, in graver mood said of the ‘unseen army of the déad on their everlasting march, that when



‘THE TWO CAPTAINS’ (1897)

J. M. Barrie bowled by Madame de Navarro. A drawing by Herman Herkomer from ‘The Allahakbarrie Book of Broadway Cricket’





they pass a rural cricket ground, the Englishman falls out to look over the gate and smile.' Which is the poetry of sentiment, the sentiment of a Scot, and does not really bear investigation, for why should the dead march everlastingly up and down this land or, in another, why not go in and have a knock if the circumstances permit?

But to return from these sunny occasions, the scent of rolled turf and young lilac, the laughter and the lemonade, to the dour, wet wynds, the seeping skies, of Kirrie and reality. There the days went on, the short summer, gleaming with rain, the scant harvest (when the children would lay an ear or so of pale oats on the dominie's desk to remind him that they were wanted a-field, wanted to bind the scant sheaves), a *hairst* that was often not 'led' till the mid October. And then followed the long, mirk, dip-lit nights, when the dark began to fall at 3 p.m. and the weak sun came up from Glen Clova about eighteen hours later. It was a hard life, and a modern generation, accustomed to the wireless and the evening paper, might say an unlovely one. But it had its old-fashioned virtues of thrift, plodding industry and a deep and sincere piety. And no doubt very simple pleasures and a very genuine hospitality met the social needs.

And, about 1868, little James Barrie went on a visit to Glasgow, where his brother Alec was

Classics Master at the Academy. It was there that the fortune which was to follow the Barrie endeavour was first made manifest. James, his brother's brother, got the freedom of the horse-show held on Academical ground. And there he dropped a penny and later could not sleep for thinking of it. So he got up and huddled into his breeks and went out into the mild moonlight. One imagines the brat nosing round the now empty show-ground among the horse-dung, the blown bits of paper, the orange peel and the torn tickets. The matches he strikes yellow a small, white, nervous face a moment, and at once are blown out in the west wind that blows off the Broomielaw. But Fortune is abroad to-night, for what does the child find but, zeal's poetic reward, a silver fourpenny bit? And so the favourite of Fairyland goes home happy.

And presently he is back again in Kirriemuir. With the approach of the 1870's things were changing in Angus and elsewhere. Machinery began to take the place of hand-loomimg. David Barrie, with a gumption which I should not have expected to find in Hendry McQuumph, decided to move with the times. So he pushes his looms into a corner 'as a room is cleared for a dance' and goes to Forfar (or to Tilliedrum as may be preferred), goes to Messrs. Laird's fine new 'works,'

newly opened to the clang and batter of every modern *clash* and improvement.

The new position meant a gain in pence and a loss in independence. The Barries took up their residence in Canmore Street; the new house was distinct promotion. It had a garden, whereas the house in Brechin Road, Kirriemuir, had not. And a garden is the next best thing to an island, and an insular preference runs throughout the Barrie inspiration; here it is and there, from *Peter Pan* to *Mary Rose*. The boy Barrie's favourite literature dealt largely in islands, *Treasure* and *Coral* Islands, Crusoe's island, even the isle of that tribe of Helvetian prigs and pedagogues, the Robinsons, which were read of while, I imagine, *Masterman Ready* was not. The grown man Barrie held that 'to be born is to be wrecked on an island.'

But the garden in Canmore Street became no Isle of Eden but the Slough of Despond, 'with pea-sticks to represent Christian on his travels and a buffet-stool for his burden.' This 'dowie idea' may have been suggested by dourness of domicile as much as by a laudable desire to express himself piously, for if near-by Laurence-kirk is the ugliest town in Scotland, Forfar is not picturesque.

In Forfar the Barrie family 'might have been seen' attending the East Free Kirk and taking

their seats to the left of the minister. It was here, surely here, that James, in the improved circumstances of the Barries, walked proudly up the aisle, 'lifting his feet high to let folk see that he had on new boots.' On week-days James Barrie went to the Forfar Academy, and we are told that he was not over-fond of games but 'was a keen lover of the country.' That was possibly because he had not yet met London.

✱ If one may judge a man by his works, James Barrie was no countryman at all. Rather was he the perfect Londoner, clubable as Pepys, urbane as Lamb. One imagines that Kensington Gardens and the Round Pond made for him Arcady enow, and that these supplied an adjective to a tobacco smoked best in Fleet Street.

But such an incense was not to be lit for another twenty years, and 1872, when James was twelve and 'nothing in life could now matter very much,' saw David Barrie back in Kirrie as foreman at Messrs. Stewart and Ogilvy's mills, by Garie water, and he and his family installed in the imposingly named 'Strathview,' which was, by comparison with the house of James's birth, a reasonably convenient and commodious abode at the junction of the Glamis and Forfar Roads. This residence was later to become that seat of domestic sentiment, '*The Cottage on the Brae.*'

It would be here and now that the first birth-

pains of romantic authorship were experienced. One sees the heroine who inspired them (with the help of the redoubtable Margaret), one knows the dainty slip of a darling who, from the pages of the monthly, *Sunshine* ('surely the most delicious periodical of any day'), shyly and with a play-acting look that pleads, sells watercress to the passer-by. She is the more intriguing since watercress as an aid to bread-and-butter is unknown in Angus.

'I lay in bed wondering what she would be up to in the next number; I have lost trout because when they nibbled my mind was wandering with her; my early life was embittered by her not arriving regularly on the first of the month. I know not whether it was owing to her loitering on the way one month to an extent flesh and blood could not bear, or because we had exhausted the penny library, but on a day I conceived a glorious idea, or it was put into my head by my mother, then desirous of making progress with her new clouty hearthrug. The notion was nothing short of this, why should I not write the tales myself? I did write them—in the garret—but they by no means helped her to get on with her work, for when I finished a chapter I bounded downstairs to read it to her, and so short were the chapters, so ready was the pen, that I was back with new manuscript before another clout had been added

to the rug. Authorship seemed, like her bannock-baking, to consist of running between two points. They were all tales of adventure (happiest is he who writes of adventure), no characters were allowed within if I knew their like in the flesh, the scene lay in unknown parts, desert islands, enchanted gardens with knights (none of your nights) on black chargers, and round the first corner a lady selling watercress.'

I have an idea that this dream-maiden was not entirely lost when a small boy became ashamed of so unmanly and pinafore a sentiment as to dream of the lassies. Vanished as a soap-bubble, she kept her hues and, later, reassembled herself, arch as a rainbow and imp as a squirrel. But she had no more cresses to sell, though she went finely, the romantic little creature, with running water. As Margaret Dearth she sits as a squirrel on the angler's shoulder—'we were fishing in a stream, you were holding the rod. We did not catch anything.' As Julie Logan, she who 'drew droll faces' and 'liked danger fine,' she goes to running water again:

'There and then I up with her and carried her into the burn. It was deep and sucking. She rubbed her head on my shoulder in a way that would make a man think she liked to be where she was. She peeped up at me, and her face was of the sweet homeliness of a dove, and so also

were her words. She said, "Kiss me first, Adam, in case you have to drop me." I kissed her, and I held her the tighter lest by some dread undoing I should let her slip. Her face was all sparkling now, almost more than enough. "Adam dear," she said, "to begin with, I am a Papist." At that awful word I dropped her in the burn. That she is still there I do not doubt, though I suppose she will have been carried farther down.'

She is elf and immortal and, as Wendy, she was born among the braes of Angus, though one might not have guessed it had one not been told. Moreover, her creator (and I give the *Sunshine's* serialist no credit for her since he could not recognise the creature and so does not deserve it), and others perhaps also, cannot to this day, because of her, 'eat watercress without emotion.'

It was in Kirrie too that the play-acting began to prompt its wright—'pronounced *wricht*.' There was the yearly 'Muckley'—or Muckle Friday, the great day of the Feeing Fair. 'Strike up, ye fiddlers!' At the Muckley one might get a taste for the stage either by witnessing *The Mountain Maid* or the *Shepherd's Bride* (did you fling a penny on the stage the cast stopped acting to scramble for it) or *The Tragedy of Tiffano and the Haughty Princess*—she with the gold lace and muslin and the dirty neck.

James Barrie, who was presently to specialise



in idylls, has done for his Muckley what Kenneth Grahame did for the Circus—but the latter had much more excuse. My own recollection of Muckle Friday is one of sodden drinking, small rain and cruelty to animals. Hulking bothy hands in hobnailed boots, corduroy trousers and calfskin vests walked together in gangs; challenging wenches skirled impudence or invitation in their wake. There was a clamour of terrified cattle and sheep and an insistent yapping of collies. By noon most people, men and women, were tipsy.

As the scene lingers in my recollection the Muckley had outlived its usefulness and had degenerated into an orgy pure and simple. No doubt it was picturesque to see the lines of snowy tents rising in the early morning beneath the shadow of the steeple. The columns of steam from the bright burnished tin or brass cauldrons, in which great savoury joints and whole kailyards of cabbages and potatoes were boiled for the refectation of the lusty ploughmen and farm labourers, were suggestive of military camp life. The blue smoke from the fires curled peacefully into the morning air, before the struggling mass of bewildered animalism had become maddened with thirst, or driven desperate by the shouts and blows of men and the barking of dogs. The 'sweetie stands,' too, and toy booths, looked very

pretty in the morning, in the freshness and glamour of their *bizarre* and meretricious display. The sugar-tablets and long striped candy-sticks, like barber's poles, the piles of gingerbread and coloured-paper 'pokies of sweeties,' outrageously 'loud' in their glaring colours; the flaunting ribands and long, streaming, dyed cravats, were of such dazzling hues that one might have been pardoned for thinking that some comet had come in contact with a regiment of rainbows, and the result had been piled up on the 'sweetie stands' at Trinity Muir, by Brechin. With afternoon the ugly, repulsive features came more into prominence. The glistening boilers were now smeared with scum and grease and smoke. The whiteness of the canvas had shared the same fate; the tents were draggled and defiled. The all-pervading odour of stale tobacco and the dead fumes of sodden whisky hung about the booths like an opiate. High voices and maudlin cries mingled with the depressing din of the weary beasts that made constant protest against the inhumanity that had kept them foodless and waterless all the long day.

The 'Muckley' has long ceased to exist, but if *Dear Brutus* was indeed born of Muckle Friday the day has not been in vain. It is true that the Fair inspired James to give a show of his own. The admission was three 'preens' or a 'bool,' the

stage was a bed in the back room over the bookshop (for Kirriemuir had a bookshop and a lending library—else whence had come *I Love my Love with an A?*) and the actors were puppets—the play being of the marionette or ‘shuffle Katie’ kind. The plot had been revealed to a privileged few, during ‘minutes,’ but it has not been revealed to me, so I cannot speak of it here.

Such, anyhow, was the first step. In 1873 the author took yet another. He took the first stage of the road South which all Scottish genius, whether it be literary and artistic or political and financial, must surely take. James Barrie went South from Kirrie to school in Dumfries, where his brother, young Alexander Barrie (we lately heard of him as Classical Master at Glasgow Academy), was Inspector of Schools ‘for Dumfries and District.’ Allowing for an occasional holiday, or official progress, I suppose that James Barrie never, since that day, spent a consecutive or collective six months in Angus. He preferred to admire from a distance. But, so I read, ‘he always preserved the happiest memories of Forfarshire.’ And he had the courage to say Rectorially in the University of St. Andrews, and to the proud red-gowned Fifers, that the ‘best thing in St. Andrews is the view of Angus across the water.’

### CHAPTER III

So James Barrie came to Dumfries and left his parents and his kindly sister, Jane Ann Barrie, to settle for all their days in Strathview or, as most prefer, in The Cottage on the Brae. We can believe that Margaret sped her small son with a loving and anxious, 'Weel, Jamie, keep your soul clean, laddie, an' your nose up, an' there's nae fear o' ye.'

We have no record of that first pilgrimage such as is conjured for us by the name Tom Brown—that glorious, cold, dark ride into Life a-top of the Tally-ho! But the young James would have got a lift into Forfar, and must have travelled, sitting on a bare yellow board, polished by a hundred 'hinterlan's,' in the open third-class coach, or pen, of the period, where the seat's back, taking a grown body below the shoulders, took a growing laddie in the neck. He would have got to Broughty Ferry and, surely an adventure, would have gone chunking across a mile or more of blue water to the skirl of gulls, the chug of engines, the dipping churn of paddles, and only a ribbon of foam to bind the traveller to his native Angus.

And James would, via Cupar-Fife, have 'won in' to Dumfries about 4.30 of a September afternoon, a day so silent that 'a cart could be heard to rumble a mile away,' there to find 'Maxwelton's braes' low and green and not particularly 'bonny,' and the broad, shining Nith not to name with that river of Damascus, the South Esk.

But the house that he had left, practically for good, was, through him, to become nigh as kenspeckle among houses as is Windsor Castle or Handley Cross. But I am not sure if the Cottage on the Brae will remain a landmark in letters, or even if it deserves to. Yet it served its purpose; it made a son of the house to prosper because he was gifted, wherever he got that gift, to make for readers of the *British Weekly* and the *St. James's Gazette*, Strathview's walls to be of jasper, and its inhabitants only a little lower than the angels. For a capability, a genius rather, for emotion and the common touch is sure of its public. But I cannot think that the people of Thrums, those gilded lilies, can endure as can the oak, or as can another Scot, one Alan Breck Stuart, whose badge was the oak.

At Strathview one gets goodness at its best, pathos at its most poignant. And it is a sad thing but a true one, that one ever prefers, in literature as in real life, to hear of sin rather than virtue,

always supposing that the former does not, by reflection or in fact, affect ourselves.

One supposes that it is true to say of the craft of writing, as of other crafts, that the child is father to the man, that original observing to capacity is a gift of the morning of life. Lord Lytton has defined genius not as the capacity for taking pains but as the capacity for wonder. And no one can wonder like a child. To me James Barrie has this childlike capacity for wonder. And it was, in the beginning, from childhood's wonder days that he mainly drew his early inspiration, drew it from interiors and inanimates, hair-bottomed chairs, mantel-borders and gasoliers, for he has little gift for scenery outside the window. And yet I would qualify my statement, for with one aspect of scenery Barrie is greatly at home. That aspect is the snowscape:

‘Another white blanket has been spread upon the glen since I looked out last night; for over the same wilderness of snow that has met my gaze for a week, I see the steading of Waster Lunny sunk deeper into the waste. The schoolhouse, I suppose, serves similarly as a snowmark for the people at the farm. Unless that it is Waster Lunny's grievous foddering the cattle in the snow, not a living thing is visible. The ghostlike hills that pen in the glen have ceased to echo to the

sharp crack of the sportsman's gun (so clear in the frosty air as to be a warning to every rabbit and partridge in the valley); and only giant Catlaw shows here and there a black ridge, rearing his head at the entrance to the glen and struggling ineffectually to cast off his shroud. Most wintry sign of all, I think as I close the window hastily, is the open farm-stile, its poles lying embedded in the snow where they were last flung by Waster Lunny's herd. Through the still air comes from a distance a vibration as of a tuning-fork: a robin, perhaps, alighting on the wire of a broken fence. . . . The friendliest thing I have seen to-day is the well-smoked ham suspended from my kitchen rafters.'

And better, far better:

'In this white world the dreariest moment is when custom makes you wind up your watch. Were it not for the Sabbath I would get lost in my dates. Not a word has gone into my Diary for a fortnight. Now would be the time if there were anything to chronicle; but nothing happens, unless one counts as events that I have brought my hens, whose toes I found frozen to the perch, and my two sheep into the manse, or that yesterday my garden slithered off to the burn with me on it like a passenger. I have sat down whiles to the Diary to try to fill up with old matter, but the whiteness of the sheets gives me a scunner,

and I put it away. The snow has choked my Diary as well as the glen.

‘The glen road, on which our intercourse with ourselves as well as with the world so largely depends, was among the first to disappear under the blanket. White hillocks, which we have been unacquainted with in any colour, are here and there, and dangerous too, for they wobble as though some great beast beneath were trying to turn round. The mountains are so rounded that they have ceased to be landmarks. The farm-towns look to me to be smored. I pull down my blinds so that I may rest my eyes on my blues and reds indoors. Though the Five Houses are barely a hundred yards away I have to pick out signs of life with my spy-glass.

‘I am practically cut off from my kind. Even the few trees are bearing white ropes, thick as my wrist, instead of branches, and the only thing that is a bonny black is the burn, once a mere driblet but now deep and boastful, and unchancey to cross.’

This is as good, or as bad, a bit of winter as you would find between two covers. Jan Ridd scarce saw such inclemency, such starvation as is here.

Barrie’s gift for interiors shows, for example, in *A Window in Thrums*. At first the McQumphra dwelling is but bare walls and outline, but by degrees it is furnished with a wonder of finery,



footstool, antimacassars, crockery (whole plates and cracked ones) and all the *penates*. But you'd expect to find the inventory mind in an author whose sister, Leeby (or Jane Ann), has the gimlet eye of an auctioneer for the shortcomings of the Manse:

““Na,” was the first remark of Leeby's that came between me and my book, “it is no new furniture.”

““But there was three cart-loads o't, Leeby, sent on frae Edinbory. Tibbie Birse helpit to lift it in, and she said the parlour furniture beat a'.”

““Ou, it's substantial, but it's no new. I sepad it had been bocht cheap second-hand, for the chair I had was terrible scratched-like, an', what's mair, the airm-chair was a heap shinnier than the rest.”

““Ay, ay, I wager it had been new stuffed. Tibbie said the carpet cowed for grandeur?”

““Oh, I dinna deny it's a guid carpet; but if it's been turned once it's been turned half a dozen times, so it's far frae new. Ay, an' forby, it was rale threadbare aneath the table, so ye may be sure they've been cuttin't an' puttin' the worn pairt whaur it would be least seen.”

““They say 'at there's two grand gas brackets i' the parlour, an' a wonderfu' gasoliery i' the dinin'-room?”

““We wasna i' the dinin'-room, so I ken nae-

thing about the gasolieri; but I'll tell ye what the gas brackets is. I recognised them immeditly. Ye mind the auld gasolieri i' the dinin'-room had twa lights? Ay, then, the parlour brackets is made oot o' the auld gasolieri.'"

But these matters are 'not for just now,' for James has but newly come to Dumfries from Thrums. It is not to be supposed that James Barrie was ever a member of the Thrums Literary Club. If such a club ever existed, it would, as is told of it, certainly have held its *sederunts* at the inn, but no member would have got home sober, for whisky and Robbie Burns are 'pack thegither.' Nor can I visualise, even in Thrums, a hand-loomer of the day weaving slowly with a Wordsworth open before him. But when I read the idyll of the Thrums Literary Club, I believe in that hand-loomer truly, and in all the ranting, roaring billies whose reading was so wide and catholic that it put graduates of the University to shame.

So I am won to things too wonderful for me since they are made as nothing by the one who can wonder properly. And that one we have just set down at Dumfries. But whatever he was to learn there, whatever he had learnt already at Kirriemuir or Forfar, it was not the geography of the Angus ordnance map. Double Dykes, for instance, is on the contrary side of the Hill of Kirriemuir to that one whereon the 'roaring

farmer came home fou.' But who cares? *Sentimental Tommy* is autobiography, not guide-book.

In Dumfries we find the bookman develop. In Dumfries there was a bookshop kept by a Mr. Anderson whose brother was no other than the Captain of the s.s. *Great Eastern*, a wonder ship, a screw-and-paddle leviathan of 1000 tons or so, about which Mr. R. M. Ballantyne had written a romance. Mr. Anderson, since all proper booksellers are kind to booklovers, especially to little boy booklovers, made Master Barrie free of his shelves and urged the local celebrity, 'Tam' Carlyle, upon him. James Barrie read and, vowing that no other author than 'Tam' should ever influence him, turned to Ballantyne and Fenimore Cooper. Familiarity with the latter author was to gain him the friendship of another young gentleman, Wellwood Anderson by name. Later, years and years later, Sir James Barrie, O.M., was to tell a Kirriemuir audience how the friendship began.

One day, in the playing-field, a lad, larger than he, stood before him and, his hands pocketed, asked:

"What's your high jump?"

"Three and a-half. What's yours?"

'The other boy said, "Four. What's your long jump?"

'I said, "Six. What's yours?" The other boy

said, "Seven. What's your hundred yards?" I said I didn't know, but what was the other boy's? And the other boy said, "Five secs. less than yours." At this I saw through the dodge; but my wrath was turned away immediately, for the boy was heard to utter the one word "Pathfinder," showing that he, like myself, was an admirer of Fenimore Cooper. I replied, says Sir James, 'with the same brevity, "Chingachgook." "Hawkeye," said he. "The Sarpint," I replied. "I knew you had read about them," he said, "as soon as I saw you." I asked him how he knew, and he said he knew it by my cut. I was uncertain what a "cut" was—I am not certain that I know now—but when he said he liked my cut I had the sense to say that I liked his cut too. . . . "Do you remember," he asked, "how Pathfinder laughed?" And I said, "Yes, he laughed so softly that no one could hear it." "Listen, then," said he, and when I replied that I could hear nothing, he said triumphantly, "Of course you can't—that was me laughing like Pathfinder—I always do it that way now." And so we swore friendship because we liked each other's cut, and any time we fell out after that was if I laughed like Pathfinder.'

Wellwood Anderson edited the school paper, *The Clown*, to which Barrie (M.A., LL.D., A.S.S.) contributed 'Rekollections of a Schoolmaster.'

These memories were not in the least like those of the (I find him rather boresome) pedagogue Gavin Ogilvy into whose sententious mouth is put the lively life and love-affair of the Reverend Dishart of Glen Quharity.

At Dumfries, too, as Sir James later acknowledged, he 'incurred for the first time a spiritual debt to the poetry of Robert Burns,' and says, speaking with tenderness, that he, while at Dumfries, traced an interesting link between Carlyle and the poet. The two great Scotsmen had made love, 'though at different times,' across the same stile. Personally, while I can imagine the granite-faced Carlyle being blate enough, for all his fierce talk when confronted by the casual petticoat, I cannot visualise the impetuous Rob content to make love *across* a stile. But I am unwilling to throw criticism at so pretty a conceit.

It has been suggested, and by no less a person than Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, that in *Sentimental Tommy* we may see the poet Burns. Surely this is absurd? The only likeness between the pair is that both are of the peasant class. The poet is a ploughman, and Tommy, failing of the Blackadder Bursary, is about to take a similar post at The Dubb of Prosen. Which, by the way, might have been Tommy's salvation. Burns is as sound as an oak despite his drams and his doxies. Tommy, for all his fine practice, was (and, had he

survived, always would have been) a fitter sort of a body. Burns was a billie. Tommy was Bayswater. Sir James Barrie, however, once upon a later day, took the chair at a Burns dinner and seemed anxious to be 'held a jovial character.' Tommy Sandys would, in a like position, have been content to be the literary lion.

It was at Dumfries that Barrie wrote his first long novel, a 'three-decker' called *A Child of Nature*, of which we may read in *Margaret Ogilvy*. The author has said that it was cynical and full of local colour.

'A long thing, one hundred thousand words. A year ago I came upon the manuscript, and, you will be relieved to hear, gently tore it up, just in case it should fall into the wrong hands, you know. My friend liked the story, and was always begging me to read the new chapter to him, especially if it was a love-chapter. I got the best of my love-scenes out of the novels by sparkling lady-authors which I read with my eyes starting out of my head in Mr. Anderson's library.'

The book's fate at the time of its finishing was, as we know, that the publisher to whom it was submitted was willing to publish it for 'so clever a lady as the writer' on the payment of a hundred pounds. 'I had sixpence,' the author has explained. So the *Child of Nature* came to nothing.

But, while at Dumfries, the 'play-acting'

became acute also. The dramatist, J. M. Barrie, wrote a playlet called *The Weavers*, and played the heroine thereof so charmingly, so convincingly, that he has told how a gentleman in the audience sought an introduction to so much youthful beauty and talent. This was, nevertheless, when the piece was performed at the Crichton Mental Institution.

And to this first success must be added the fame which was young Barrie's owing to another Dumfries play, *Off the Line*. Wellwood Anderson added to his editorial duties those of President of the Dumfries Amateur Dramatic Society, a society of which Master Wellwood's friend, Barrie, was the secretary. *Off the Line* was a frank plagiarism of a play, similar in title, which the President had enjoyed while on holiday in Edinburgh. The skit was preceded by a curtain-raiser, 'an original work by J. M. B.,' called *Bandelero the Bandit*.

Of the Dumfries Theatre, of *Bandelero*, the author has written:

'It is a pretty little building, quite complete, but so tiny that you smile to it as to a child when you go in; and, though it is occasionally visited by good companies, it has rarely been known to "pay." Can London theatre-goers picture a dress circle from which they could almost shake hands with a man in the pit or gallery, and with a leap

pop on to the stage? It is not really of course quite so tiny as that, and no doubt the sensation of smallness arises partly from your knowing, more or less, every person in the house, his occupation, and the number of his family. You know still better those other old friends, the scenery, who may be said to receive you with a wink.

‘A travelling company is not here for many days (they are never longer than a week) before every one in the town has met the members in the street, or gathering flowers on country roads, or in a boat up the river. It tickles us to see them smelling the flowers, just as your wife might do, or handling the oars as you do yourself. Much interest is taken in their proceedings, and numbers of us can tell you not only where they are lodging, but what accommodation they have and how much they pay for their rooms and which one sleeps on the sofa. Captain S. is seen calling on the manager at his lodgings, and tongues are at once loosened on his object. The probability is that he is to give the patronage of the militia officers to a benefit on Friday night. We had a good deal of skating in the winter, and one day some of the members of a company then at the theatre came to look on. A townsman walked a few yards to get a chair for one of the ladies; and by evening it was common talk that the gallant



Mr. Dash had run all the way from the pond to his home for a chair, and run back with it on his head through the streets, merely because the lovely Miss Vavasour had said she felt tired. On the other hand, the players soon know as much about us. Their landladies are as ready to gossip to them as of them; and I always feel when I go to see a new company that they are on the look-out for me and know that I have a slight squint. They are not specially interested in us as brothers and sisters; but they like to know who are theatre-goers, who need a programme sent as an intimation of their performance, and who are sure to come without it. Travelling pantomime companies are not long in finding out which of us have large families.

‘Even if the entertainment is of the dullest, the “front of the house” is still interesting. You find that your butcher patronises burlesque, while your baker likes long slow deaths. You see a face in the pit that you are sure to remember but cannot identify; and after a long time you satisfy yourself that those are the whiskers of your housemaid’s cousin, whom you have observed occasionally at the kitchen table. You note that Mr. Roberts generally comes in at half-time, and draw your own deductions about his means therefrom. You shake your head over the way in which Mrs. Jones goes to the theatre without an

escort; and when the Jenkins girls come crushing in after the curtain has risen, you call to mind that they are late for everything, even for church. There is always something to interest you in the smallest theatre, even though it may not be the play.

‘I loved that little theatre in Dumfries, for which Robert Burns once wrote prologues. I had the good fortune to frequent it in what was one of its great years (probably 1877). Usually it was only visited by wandering companies who were thankful to be gone in a few days, but on it in that year descended a famous actor and manager who kept it open triumphantly for a whole winter. His name was J. H. Clynes, and I don’t know if he was really the great actor the boy at the end of the first row thought him. Anon in after years saw the name of Clynes on London theatre bills, but never went to a performance lest sadness should come of it. Mr. Clynes was my first Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, and many others, and he sometimes played two and more of them in a night. I never spoke to him. Heavens, how could any one have dared! But I saw Hamlet lift a mug to his lips. I never spoke to any of them, but I walked behind most of them as they strolled abroad and I told other boys that I had done so. More than one afterwards played in early pieces of mine. Occasionally Clynes brought

"star" companies to glorify his reign for a few nights, and one of the stars was J. L. Toole, among whose supporters was George Shelton, who afterwards "created" the part of Smee in *Peter Pan*, and since then has hardly been out of the bill.

'It was in those schoolboy days that I had an experience not always vouchsafed to greater mortals—I went "behind the scenes." This was so tremendous that to write it even now in ordinary ink and as part of a sentence seems an outrage. I lay down my pen and walk my room for a time before I can resume in comparative composure. The play was Mr. Clynes's pantomime of I now know not what, but it was the merriest and wittiest that boy ever saw, and I am sorry that the only line I remember was a play on the manager's name; some one had to say "I declines the task," which was always received by the boy in the corner seat with rhapsody, though I daresay he heard as good in London pantomimes afterwards. The occasion of his being allowed to cross into the realms of bliss was the benefit (they were all for benefits in those days) of one of the players, I think the principal "boy," who was such a favourite that on the eventful night the house proper could not contain all her admirers. That boy must have had the luck to arrive late, not only his corner seat was

gone, but every seat and even standing room, and a score or more would-be patrons left out in the cold. In the astonishing circumstances we were asked if we wouldn't mind coming behind the scenes and making ourselves as small as possible. "If we wouldn't mind!" I hugged to myself the extraordinary graciousness of the phrase, as well as other events of that Arabian evening, with their culmination, which was when the beautiful lady said to me in passing that her shoe, confound it, was loose as usual. She may have mistaken me for some one else, but it was to me she said it. We never met again. I was speechless and so could not thank her, but I do so now. Is it possible that she meant I could tie those shoe-laces?

'Such doings led inevitably to the forming of a dramatic club at school for which I wrote my first play, *Bandelero the Bandit*. No page of it remains, but though it played for less than half an hour it contained all the most striking scenes that boy had lapped up from his corner seat, and had one character (played by same boy) who was a combination of his favourite characters in fiction, the only two now remembered being Smike from *Nicholas Nickleby* and Wamba from *Ivanhoe*. I also appeared in another piece as a young wife, not so much to show my versatility as because they would not let me have a more leading part,

and in this I wore a pig-tail cunningly pinned to my hat to blow away all doubts about my sex. In the delirium of being cheered when the curtain revealed us, my husband knocked over the breakfast-table, and instead of being stage-struck dumb the wife grandly saved the situation by putting her arms round his neck and saying "You clumsy darling." This must have been one of the finest instances of presence of mind ever shown on the stage; but pride in my histrionic achievements having left me, I am willing to present it to any other actor who may now be writing his life and is hard up for reminiscences. Long afterwards I saw Miss Irene Vanbrugh playing my part and told her that though she was good she missed some of my womanly touches.'

The two plays above named were produced under magisterial patronage and, bringing down the house, brought down also the fierce condemnation of a local clergyman who, so full of crime and blood were they, demanded, in the public Press, that they should be banned. He thus made them and their author, if not famous for all time, at least temporarily notorious. A correspondence raged, and the plaintiff introduced, on one excuse or another, the name, the great name, of Professor Blackie. Here follows a brief glimpse of Blackie from Barrie's, not so far away now, *Edinburgh Eleven*, which is no cricketing tale such as a reader

might expect from the title and the author. (Of this Eleven the author wrote, years afterwards, to Robertson Nicoll: 'Do you remember how I wrote some papers for you on Scottish worthies, which were published in a little volume called *An Edinburgh Eleven*, and how W. G. Grace came across it and tossed it aside on discovering that not one of my XI could bat or bowl?')

This of Blackie: 'Did you ever watch him marching along Princes Street on a warm day, when every other person was broiling in the sun? His head is well thrown back, the staff, grasped in the middle, jerks back and forward like a weaver's shuttle, and the plaid flies in the breeze. Other people's clothes are hanging limp. Blackie carries his breeze with him.'

To return, however, to *Off the Line*, mark the great advertisement which now gratuitously accrued to the author along with the calling aloud upon Blackie, who did indeed 'carry the breeze with him' to Dumfries. Shortly afterwards the vivacious Professor came to lecture in the Mechanics' Hall in support of his pet scheme for establishing a Gaelic Chair in Edinburgh University, for which, by the way, he said, 'Her Majesty, decent woman, has given £20.' But as he strode up and down the platform he launched forth about 'the recent storm in a tea-cup' and invited the minister—who, however, was not

present, though members of his family were—to come on to the platform and he would ‘pound him to a jelly.’

After five years at Dumfries Academy, Youth, approaching Manhood, took a further step on the way to Fleet Street and the South, which is to say that, retreating slightly North, *pour mieux sauter*, James Barrie went to Edinburgh University. There he came under the influence of the *litterati* of the city. In Edinburgh Barrie met Charles Whibley of the *National Observer*—the ‘journal’s greatest pride and terror.’ Whibley, when not on the war-path, wrote the ‘best English of his day.’ In Edinburgh Barrie also met Henley:

‘The stalwart burly man (as he was till he stood up) was sitting at a piano playing impromptu music to his child of three or so, the loveliest of little girls, who sometimes as he played sat on the piano till she fell into his lap, and sometimes danced round the instrument and under it and over me. . . . Henley could not cross a room without his crutch, and he would stand for hours leaning on the back of a chair with his coat off. Such was the glamour of him to young men that you would sometimes find a number of them listening to him, all unaware that they were leaning on the backs of chairs with their coats off. He was a splendidly ironic, bearded man, and John Silver was Stevenson’s idea of Henley taken

to piracy. It was Henley's crutch that Silver threw to clinch an argument, and thus also did Henley throw it, as I have seen. On this occasion the subject of discussion was merely literary, the scene was the steps of a London café, and the opponent was Oscar Wilde, a very courteous opponent too, but he was neatly pinned by that javelin.'

But Barrie has done nothing to add directly in fiction to the glory of Edinburgh and of his *Alma Mater*, as have others done who have heard the bugles from the Castle Rock. A perfect library of books has been written about Edinburgh, as Mr. Alexander Smith reminds us. Defoe, in his own matter-of-fact, garrulous way, has described the city. Its towering streets, and the follies of its society, are reflected in the pages of *Humphrey Clinker*. Certain aspects of city life, city amusements, city dissipations, are mirrored in the clear, although somewhat shallow, stream of Fergusson's humour. The old life of the place, the traffic in the streets, the old-fashioned shops, the citizens with cocked hats and powdered hair, with hospitable paunches and double chins, with no end of wrinkles and hints of latent humour in their worldly-wise faces, with gold-headed sticks, and shapely limbs encased in close-fitting small-clothes, are found in *Kay's Portraits*. Scott has, I suppose, done more for Edinburgh than all her great men put together.



Burns has hardly left a trace of himself in the northern capital. During his residence there his spirit was soured, and he was taught to drink whisky-punch—obligations which he repaid by addressing 'Edina, Scotia's darling seat,' in a copy of his worst verses. Scott discovered that the city was beautiful—he sang its praises over the world—and he has put more coin into the pockets of its inhabitants than if he had established a branch of manufacture of which they had the monopoly. Scott's novels were to Edinburgh what the tobacco trade was to Glasgow about the close of the last century.

One supposes that Edinburgh was over-fine to inspire a youth whose instinct was of the magnifying-glass, whose inspiration was to seek out the humble and meek and to exalt them. And yet it might be thought that in the Lawnmarket and the Canongate, where the high crowded houses of those days climbed skyward, peaked, gabled and picturesque without, and, quite certainly, within full of poverty and squalor and, very probably, of the heroism of the obscure, could be found inspiration of the true, Thrumming-the-heart-strings, Barrie order.

In Edinburgh Barrie met Blackie, Calderwood, Tait and Chrystal, and, no doubt, was directly or indirectly, in some sort of touch with other members of the *Edinburgh Eleven*, who were

Lord Rosebery, Robert Louis Stevenson, Walter Smith, Joseph Thomson, and Professors Masson, Fraser and Sellar.

Of his failure to give Dr. Whyte a place in the team the author writes:

‘When I read that Dr. Whyte was dead I unearthed, with some difficulty, a copy of that volume to read what I had written of him so long ago, and to my bewilderment I find that he was not one of the eleven, though his name occurs. How that came about I do not know—he might so well have been their captain, he or Masson, for those were certainly to me the two great names in Edinburgh at that time. Perhaps he seemed too near to me, and too dear, to be written about, for I had known him all my life, and sat at his feet from the beginning thereof, and always felt an awe of that leonine head. To know him was to know what the Covenanters were like in their most splendid hours. This may seem to lay too much stress of the sternness of him. He could be stern certainly, and then if you were its object you felt a gale of wind blowing that you were not likely to forget, but it was a face far more often lit up by delight in something fine that he had discovered; and wherever there were fine things he was the man to dig them up. He came to announce his discoveries with greater joy on his face than I think I have ever seen on the face of

any other man. The fervour of his face, the beneficence of it, they will shine on like a lamp. His greatest genius lay in "uplift." He uplifted more men and women than any other Scotsman of his time.'

Barrie did in prose for his team of learned men what Henley was doing, about then, in poetry for the Edinburgh Infirmary staff. This gesture made, Edinburgh got little more from James Barrie. James had gone up to the University with the Law in mind, as has gone many another good literary man. I can imagine, save for a gift of oratory, no one less fitted for that aplomb, pushing, insincere and wholly pugnacious profession than Barrie. I could imagine Barrie a Burns, intemperate of body and soul, more easily than I can see him a trenchant, senatorial Braxfield. But he was to be saved from the Session House. Half in jest, half, possibly, in earnest, he has said how he owed his salvation mostly to David Masson, Aberdonian, journalist and incumbent of the Chair of Rhetoric and English Literature at Edinburgh University.

I read that Masson's style influenced that of Barrie; I can trace nothing of any supposed resemblance except that each style is elegant, not with the profuse elegances of a Pater but with the eloquences of brevity, clearness and force. Thomas Chatterton was one of David

Masson's 'subjects,' indeed he wrote the young poet's biography—naturally a brief task. Lecturing one day on Chatterton, Masson said of that ephemerid that had he smoked and cultivated congenial society he would not have died of starvation in a garret at the age of twenty. Yet for a poet so to die is what the public expects of him, and he is therefore for ever sure of popularity. Masson's words turned Barrie's mind to tobacco, but not to society, for 'when not working he went alone and kept his oak sported.' Masson's influence encouraged the student still further in a belief that he was born for letters. The latter said that he meant to be 'a Chatterton, only greater.'

Masson was, of course, one of the *Eleven*:

'It was the opening of the session when the fees were paid, and a whisper ran round the quadrangle that Masson had set off home with three hundred one-pound notes stuffed into his trouser pockets. There was a solemn swell of awestruck students to the gates, and some of us could not help following him. He took his pockets coolly. When he stopped it was at a second-hand book-stall, where he rummaged for a long time. Eventually he pounced upon a dusty, dragged little volume and went off proudly with it beneath his arm. He seemed to look suspiciously at strangers now, but it was not the money but the

book he was keeping guard over. His pockets, however, were unmistakably bulging out. I resolved to go in for literature.'

Barrie took his degree in the latter part of 1882. By then it had become beyond question that he could be no glib advocate to wear a stuff, even a silk, gown, but that he must make the written word his profession rather than the spoken one. But by writing he no doubt meant journalism. At that time journalism was replacing the manse as a magic casement, as a livelihood for an ambitious member of a Scots family of the working classes. It was Miss Barrie who, her brother's ambition in mind, saw in the *Dundee Advertiser* that the *Nottingham Journal* wanted a leader-writer. It is not strange that this English provincial daily should advertise its needs in Scotland. For in Scotland could be found the born galley-slave (Mr. Kipling has sung of him), punctual, desperately industrious, devoted to the hand that pays him and, above all things, cheap. The *Journal* was paying three guineas a week for its leaders. 'What is a leader?' James Barrie is said to have enquired with judicial ignorance when Miss Jane Ann called his attention to the advertisement. But he answered the last, got the job and came to Nottingham. The Rubicon was fairly crossed, it was to be ink and the goose-quill from which the wings of angels are, some-

times anyhow, grown, even if, as James Anon, they have but the one wing wherewith to fly.

Barrie went to Nottingham as a journalist in 1883. It is a coincidence that just then young Mr. Kipling likewise accepted, in India, a similar position. Journalism was to be to each a good school. It taught them the value of a story maybe. It taught them to tell that story in few words and with polished facets. It taught them the value of space. Both young men did indeed work with all their mights and main. Kipling has described his laborious apprenticeship, and Barrie's seems to have been, apart from the hardship of the Indian climate, equally strenuous. Daily he must turn out three cocksure columns of editorial omniscience. Twice a week, under the signature Hippomenes, did he do a special article of literary value, a column of 'notes,' and occasional verse called 'The Modern Peripatetic,' but of lesser account than the articles. Yet this of the 'notes' is worth preserving; the book it refers to must surely be *Leaves from the Journal of Our Lives in the Highlands*:

'A great deal of nonsense will be talked over the Queen's book for the next nine days. It is said that too many benefits were showered upon John Brown, but that is nonsense. In the new book the Queen tells how she presented her attendant on one occasion with an oxidised silver

biscuit-box, which drew tears from his eyes and the exclamation that this was too much. "God knows it is not," is Her Majesty's remark; and I cannot see that it was.'

The leader-writer was in Nottingham during three years. Nottingham combines, I read, the bustle of commerce and the making of money with an old-fashioned or parochial spirit. During his stay there his editorials never ceased to denounce Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and Mr. Henry George. Much in the same way would a minister in Thrums, hard up for a pirlicue, never fail to find it in having 'one more *whap*, my freens, at the Painted Whure of Babylon.'

And, as any other good young Scot, young Barrie was ever seeking to better himself. This he did by bombarding the London Press with articles (most of them came back) and, at the same time, applying to other provincial journals for preferment. Readers of the autobiographical *When a Man's Single* will know of Nottingham (or Silchester), and something of journalist life there and of *Rob Angus* or James Barrie.

One knows that at Nottingham came the first inspiration that founded the Kailyard school. The Auld Lights had revealed themselves to their young torch-bearer in a flash of inspiration. Mr. Greenwood, editor of the *St. James's Gazette*, had scribbled on a rejected manuscript, 'but I

liked that Scotch thing—any more of those?’ The ‘thing’ referred to had been the first idyll of the Auld Lights. One knows that the supply was created by the demand—and thereafter the weavers’ weaver was frequently at his loom—weaving Auld Lights. After he had successfully despatched the webs of a round dozen, ‘I wrote to Greenwood of my ambition to hie London-wards and my Scottish confidence that I could live on a pound a week. I did not ask for a place on the paper, and indeed, except for that year at Nottingham, I have been a “free-lance” all my days. I did, however, promise to abide by his decision. It came promptly, telling me to stay where I was till he saw more of my work. So, to put it bluntly, I set off for London next week, on the night of March 28, 1885.’

A momentous adventure, although the adventurer ‘cannot remember what the weather was like.’ It was from Dumfries and not from Nottingham that the letter to Greenwood was written, a holiday composition. And at Dumfries was the reply promptly received, since Greenwood, alarmed at the prospect of a protégé and a responsibility, and wanting neither the one nor the other, wrote, as we know, by return. So we may guess that the weather was the usual Dumfries weather, mild and rainy. There would be a promise of spring in the air. The London



train would be 'due awa' about midnight, and the traveller, walking to the station, would see the wet street paved in the windy gold of the fluttering gas lamps and the fitful silver of a galloping moon. Happy omens both.

Here is a picture of the young Barrie as he was on that very night:

'Let us survey our hero as he sits awake in a corner of his railway compartment, well aware that the end of it must be to perch, or to let go, like a bat in the darkness behind the shutter. He has a suspicious eye, poor gomer, for any fellow-traveller who is civil to him. He is gauche and inarticulate, and as thin as a pencil but not so long (and is going to be thinner). Expression, an uncomfortable blank. Wears thick boots (with nails in them), which he will polish specially for social functions. Carries on his person a silver watch bought for him by his father from a pedlar on fourteenth birthday (that was a day). Carries it still, No. 57841. Has no complete dress-suit in his wooden box, but can look every inch as if attired in such when backed against a wall. Manners, full of nails like his boots. Ladies have decided that he is of no account, and he already knows this and has private anguish thereanent. Hates sentiment as a slave may hate his master. Only asset, except a pecuniary one, is a certain grimness about not being beaten. Pecuniary

asset, twelve pounds in a secret pocket which he sometimes presses, as if it were his heart. He can hear, as you may, the hopes and fears that are thumping inside him. That bigger thump means that the train has reached St. Pancras station.'

The traveller, as we would suppose, reached London on the morning of the 29th of March. He would surely be unshaved and unwashed, for, in 1885, corridor carriages and lavatory accommodation were not for third-class passengers, nor, I think, for first. But the omens of overnight were still propitious. As he dragged his kist, a square wooden box and a family heirloom, to the left-luggage office (to do so personally would be saving the porter's tip and tuppence is always tuppence) the placard of the previous evening's *St. James's Gazette* caught his eye. Upon it was starred, in noble letters, 'The Rooks begin to Build'—the title of an article sent from Dumfries but a few days ago. 'In other dazzling words, before being in London two minutes he had earned two guineas.'

He breakfasted on what he cannot recall, but it may be guessed that it was mostly on rook. The world was at his foot, he had on thick boots 'with nails in them'; he would kick it.

## CHAPTER IV

THE Kirriemarian has now entered the Forbidden City. He came as a spy; he was soon to be its conqueror, or at least among the victors. London was known to him, as to the Brontës, in 1885, by maps only, and chiefly by the map of Bloomsbury. Margaret Barrie and her son had studied the maps together, drawn them even—with Hyde Park omitted. For Margaret could not, we have been told, bear to think of those Park seats where the abject failures pass the night. But in practice no real failure has tuppence to pay for a chair, and if he had he'd be put out of it soon after sunset. Yet the son has imagined Hyde Park, 'so gay by day, haunted nightly by the ghosts of mothers who run, from seat to seat, looking for their sons.' And this was written after ten years of London life!

But to-day the author has come to Town, he has bought a silk hat (it is to last him many years), also a penny bottle of ink, and he has gone to lodge in little Grenville Street and to lunch daily from a paper bag on four halfpenny buns. But he did not go hungry to bed: 'There was jam and



J. M. BARRIE IN 1900



other delicacies from home, and abundance of bread and cheese and tea, and baked potatoes from the oven in the street, and something exquisite from a tin.'

Young Barrie was in Grenville Street for four years. His room looked on to a blank wall. But between wall and window stood a dank but companionable tree. At least, we know that, when the writer wanted company, he could count, did the season suit, the leaves on the tree. His room was a small one, so small that only because it had a door could it be called a room. So far, Mr. Barrie had achieved his young ambition; here was the Chatterton tradition to an ounce, and without its principal disadvantages.

During the four years in Grenville Street, while Barrie ate his buns, across the Strand, in Villiers Street, young Kipling ate the sausages-and-mashed of Mr. Harris the Sausage King. Kipling has not written of sausages. Barrie would walk the streets eating his buns, on which he claims to be an authority, as on scones and penny tarts, about all of which he has written articles. He has said that he could be haughty with the suppliers of confectionery and would withdraw his custom at the slightest hint of the familiar, 'as when, without waiting for his order, they at sight of him began to put four halfpenny buns into a bag.'

Both Kipling and Barrie were contributors to the *St. James's Gazette*. Both might have been called rising stars; indeed, Kipling already began to blaze as redly as his own Mars. A reviewer of 1898 thus compared the two young journalist-writers:

‘To begin with, in spite of the “tedious, brief solemnity” of many leading articles, the first business of a writer for the Press is not to be tedious, and Mr. Barrie and Mr. Kipling have learnt their lesson. Nowadays sentences and stories grow shorter, just as quick-firing guns are driving heavy pieces out of the field. Readers there are whose patience is so scant of breath that they call Scott long-winded. It is a far cry from *Waverley*, with its leisurely preambles, to a book like *Plain Tales from the Hills*. For Mr. Barrie, as for Mr. Kipling, the short story is the natural mode of expression; when they attempt a larger canvas you do not see them at their best, and when they are at their longest they are short. It was a cunning typesetter that spun a third volume out of *The Little Minister*. This inability, or dislike, to construct or conduct a long story (in itself a decided limitation of the narrative art), is the material characteristic which marks these two authors. It is not the only quality which they hold in common. No two novelists of the present day, or of any day, are more

opposed in matter and in manner; but this only makes the strong affinity between them the more interesting and significant.

‘No doubt the difference is at first sight more striking than the resemblance. Even when Mr. Kipling is at his worst it is difficult to lay down the book till the last page is turned. It is no depreciation to say of Mr. Barrie that he has scarcely more narrative power than the author of *Tristram Shandy*. A novel will be of a high and noble order, the more it represents of inner, and the less it represents of outer, life; and the ratio between the two will supply a means of judging any novel, of whatever kind, from *Tristram Shandy* down to the crudest and most sensational tale of knight or robber. *Tristram Shandy* has, indeed, as good as no action at all; and there is not much in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Wilhelm Meister*. Even *Don Quixote* has relatively little; and what there is, is very unimportant, and introduced merely for the sake of fun. And these four are the best of all existing novels.

‘Mr. Barrie worships women. Mr. Kipling has a positive cult of virility; what delights him is the exuberant vigour of manhood—of man the animal, who fights and loves and drinks, and sets his soul upon a dozen different hazards. Man in Mr. Barrie’s stories is a thrifty, contriving creature, and eternally concerned about his soul’s



welfare. Even Mr. Stevenson is not metaphysical enough for Mr. Barrie, and "Gavin Ogilvy" has told him so, like one of the "Auld Lights" remonstrating, out of the greatness of his love, with their shepherd. Mr. Barrie wants to tell us of the strange things that men are, Mr. Kipling of the strange things that they do. Mr. Kipling revels in a fight; Mr. Barrie only mentions that after the battle in the Tenements, Lang Tammis in the precentor's box had a plaster on his cheek when he gave out the psalm. Mr. Kipling's interest is in the abnormal, the unconventional, the lawless; he has a gaudy mass of information about queer people in queer conditions. Mr. Barrie studies life in its greyest. Mr. Kipling does not write "*virginibus puerisque*"; his morality, for good and for evil, is the morality of Fielding. There is much to shake the head at, much actively to dislike, but there is a redeeming strain in him, a salt of righteousness, in his passionate love for the race and the Empire he belongs to, and in the confidence and glory with which the "flag of England" inspires him; nor have many men better realised the strong love and comradeship between man and man that is best seen and known in the rough walks of danger. Mr. Barrie's morality is beyond reproach. His standard is as rigid for those whom he respects as Mr. Kipling's is lax. Like a true man, it is strength he would

have in a man, but a strength which, instead of being the lusty child of passions, grows by grappling and throwing them.'

It might be carelessly said that Kipling's subjects would have their interest, no matter who treated of them, but that no one but Barrie could have made 'Auld Lichts' attractive. Half of this may very probably be true, but not the first half. There is no greater obstacle to the successful treatment of a subject than its strangeness. Kipling had broken new ground, and to break new ground a strong and skilful hand is needed. An inferior artist would either have bewildered us with explanations or left us incredulous and uncomprehending. But this is where his journalistic experience helped Kipling. There is one thing clear about journalism; it is an excellent school in which to learn the art of description.

A journalist has no occasion for the narrative faculty, properly so called; the most that will be required or tolerated from him is an anecdote. Dramatic effect and nine-tenths of the whole art of imaginative composition are foreign to his work. Three things alone must he be able to do: to advocate, to observe and to describe. Excellence in realistic description is just the one essential point which Barrie and Kipling had in common. But they made very different uses of the accomplishment.

One wonders if the above anonymous reviewer lived to see the fulfilment of both writers and their respective and final marks made on English literature?

It was during the sojourn in Grenville Street that the first five Barrie books came about, two of them, *Auld Licht Idylls* and *A Window in Thrums*, striking a gold-mine in the Kailyard and founding its cult and a school in the Lowland Scots.

Simultaneously with the writing of books appeared Press work of various pot-boiling importance. On the whole, the author progressed steadily, with many 'little articles trotting behind him.' Mr. Greenwood, of the *St. James's Gazette*, who had published 'The Rooks,' though suspicious of birds, was soon publishing most of his young contributor's work. He even took an article on 'Sparrows,' which the author, plagiarising himself, wrote because 'he had pulled it off with the rooks.' His sparrows were those who 'demonstrated vocally of a morning outside his window.' They may, with their chatter, have constituted a nuisance to previous lodgers. But this one made it a stern rule of life, instead of grumbling at minor misfortunes, to consider whether there might not be an article therein. And he sat at his window and gloured at the sparrows, and presently made two guineas out of them. A rate

of payment princely at a time when 'I wrote two stories of 20,000 words each and received three guineas for each of them. Though being done at a few sittings they left a permanence on my second finger.' For the writer used no Remington; his copy, clearly written and free of correction, went to Press in longhand. An MS. of 1885 is before me, it reflects credit on the Misses Cray (*née* Adam) of Kirriemuir. No professional writer of to-day, with the possible exception of Mr. Eric Parker, could write so legibly. But, to-day, no writer, I thankfully acknowledge it, need be legible in longhand.

Barrie's first book, *Better Dead*, a satire, was published at 1s. (at the author's expense) in 1887. He lost £25 over it. But he was 'wading' in the *St. James's Gazette* articles and could afford the loss. He has called *Better Dead*, very truly, insignificant. Its hero was Andrew Riach of Wheens, and the author carried the book in his pocket for a week. He has said of it:

'The cover of the book, which is certainly the best of it, shows the then well-known figures of Sir William Harcourt and Lord Randolph Churchill about to turn a street corner where the well-intentioned hero is waiting for them with an up-raised knife. I have been lent a copy for reproduction, as the only "first edition" I seem to possess of my works is the third volume of *The*

*Little Minister*. The designer of the cover of *Better Dead* was William Mitchell, an old school friend of Dumfries days, with whom I used to wait at pit doors in Edinburgh to be haunted by the dire orbs of Irving. The hero is called Andrew Riach, in order to associate him with Sandy Riach, one of the new friends Anon gradually made in London, and among the best of all. Anon read the work to him, chapter by chapter, and Riach listened with proud delight to his depredations. I like the book in memory because I see his face at those readings and the smoking-cap in which Anon insisted on his hearing them. Sandy Riach was the only person who led me into crime. He begged me (and I fell), as one uninterested in politics, to let him have the satisfaction of being able to say that he had bribed me into voting for I know not whom with a glass of beer. This, I think, was the only time I was ever in a London pub. I have, however, been wilder than that.'

*Better Dead* may have been insignificant. Yet it was a good piece of fooling of this sort:

'The only objectionable thing about Clarrie was her long hair. She wore a black frock, and looked very breakable. Nothing irritates a man so much. Andrew gathered her passionately in his arms, while a pained puzzled expression struggled to reach his face. Then he replaced her roughly

on the ground and left her. It was impossible to say whether they were engaged.'

And it won its author his first 'scalp.' To those who may not know what a 'scalp' in literature is, I would say that a 'scalp' is a letter of appreciation of work done, addressed to an author by a reader personally unknown to that author. It does not count as a 'scalp' if a friend or an acquaintance should write a letter of thanks or felicitation. These are welcome as the flowers in May, but they are not 'scalps.' J. M. Barrie's first 'scalp' was that of a great chief, it was the scalp of Lord Randolph Churchill. Rivers will run uphill, rocks will melt in the sun, a girl will forget her first lover before a writer will forget his first 'scalp.'

I read that *Better Dead* was written in gloomy mood because of certain editorial rejections:

'It may have been directed against the other Anons who forestalled him in the *St. James's*, some of whom I was to know in later years. They were of course people who in his interest would have been "better dead." I hope there is nothing in this, however, as one of them, then I think at Oxford, is now the highest Prelate in the land, and has stated that my industry on the *St. James's* was what made him turn to another calling.'

Years later it was suggested to Sir James

Barrie that *Better Dead* be reprinted? The author replied, 'Better Dead.'

It has been seen that editors occasionally turned down the Barrie MSS. But that fate cannot often have been theirs. Barrie was to know few of the struggles and set-backs of lesser men. He followed journalism, as Saul followed asses, to find a kingdom. To myself it seems impossible that any editor could have been pernickety enough to pick and choose of the output of so promising and valuable a contributor. But editors must, I suppose, show their manliness and independence and justify the 'we' of royal custom and their own. 'F. Anstey,' Barrie's only contemporary rival in the fantastic, even he, already a lion, suffered many rejections. Gilbert's *Bab Ballads* were refused space in *Punch*.

Let us think who the young writers were with whom Barrie was in market competition. They were a brilliant coterie, the best of them. I cannot be expected to mention them all. They were the young men of what is called 'the nineties,' which, in reality, implies a decade and a half, since the literary 'nineties' surely signify the years which lie between, say, 1885 and 1900. I must limit that border of tulips to the blooms with which those of our man from Kirriemuir were, in that season, comparable in colour and out-standingness.

I therefore rule out Stevenson, who in the middle eighties was already author of *Kidnapped* and *A Child's Garden of Verses*. John Silver had already roared 'I'll lay to that,' Jim Hawkins had been in the apple-barrel, for some years. 'R. L. S.' was already among the immortals, as Scott is, as Dickens. He, as the two latter, though he introduced no new fashion, as they did, is too great to have imitators. I will not think of R. L. Stevenson, Scot though he is, with the young Barrie, who was then but 'cutting his prentice fingers on the master's tools.'

George Meredith, whom I would not mention in the same breath as Stevenson had he not been devotedly admired by J. M. Barrie, was old enough to be his admirer's father and deservedly famous enough, 'a Shakespearian fragment,' to merit the lovely tribute paid him, at the last, by the younger man. I know no such charming obituary, so I must needs quote from it:

'All morning there had been a little gathering of people outside the gate. It was the day on which Mr. Meredith was to be, as they say, buried. He had been, as they say, cremated. The funeral coach came, and a very small thing was placed in it and covered with flowers. One plant of the wallflower in the garden would have covered it. The coach, followed by a few others, took the road to Dorking where, in familiar phrase, the funeral



was to be. In a moment or two all seemed silent and deserted, the cottage, the garden, and Box Hill.

‘The cottage was not deserted, as They knew who now trooped into the round in front of it, their eyes on the closed door. They were the mighty company, his children, Lucy and Clara and Rhoda and Diana and Rose and Old Mel and Roy Richmond and Adrian and Sir Willoughby and a hundred others, and the shades of many dogs, and they stood in line against the box-wood, waiting for him to come out. Each of his proud women carried a flower, and the hands of all his men were ready for the salute. His dogs were in commotion.

‘In the room on the right, in an armchair which had been his home for years—to many the throne of letters in this country—sat an old man, like one forgotten in an empty house. When the last sound of the coaches had passed away he moved in his chair. He wore grey clothes and a red tie, and his face was rarely beautiful, but the hair was white, and the limbs were feeble, and the piercing eyes dimmed, and he was hard of hearing. He moved in his chair, for something was happening to him, old age was falling from him. This is what is meant by Death to such as he, and the company awaiting knew. His eyes became again those of the eagle, and his hair was brown, and

the lustiness of youth was in his frame, but still he wore the red tie. He rose, and not a moment did he remain within the house, for "golden lie the meadows, golden run the streams," and "the fields and the waters shout to him golden shouts." He flung open the door. . . . Without knowing why, for his work was done, he turned to the left, passing his famous cherry-blossom, and climbed between apple-trees to a little house of two rooms, whence many of that noble company had sprung. It is the Chalet, where he worked, and good and brave men will ever bow proudly before it, but good and brave women will bow more proudly still. He went there only because he had gone so often, and this time the door was locked; he did not know why nor care. He came swinging down the path, singing lustily, and calling to his dogs, his dogs of the present and the past; and they yelped with joy, for they knew they were once again to breast the hill with him.

'He strode up the hill whirling his staff, for which he had no longer any other use. His hearing was again so acute that from far away on the Dorking road he could hear the rumbling of a coach. It had been disputed whether he should be buried in Westminster Abbey or in a quiet churchyard, and there came to him somehow a knowledge (it was the last he ever knew of little things) that people had been at variance as to

whether a casket of dust should be laid away in one hole or in another, and he flung back his head with the old glorious action, and laughed a laugh "broad as a thousand beeves at pasture."

'Box Hill was no longer deserted. When a great man dies—and this was one of the greatest since Shakespeare—the immortals await him at the top of the nearest hill. He looked up and saw his peers. They were all young, like himself. He waved the staff in greeting. One, a mere stripling, "slight unspeakably," R. L. S., detached himself from the others, crying gloriously, "Here's the fellow I have been telling you about!" and ran down the hill to be the first to take his Master's hand. In the meanwhile an empty coach was rolling on to Dorking.'

But George Meredith is not a contemporary writer within the meaning of this chapter. Nor is Thomas Carlyle, of whom Barrie has said that 'Tam' was the only writer he ever tried to imitate. Carlyle regarded not a lad's homage, the best homage of all. Barrie writes without resentment of his idol's ill-manners:

'When I was at school in Dumfries I often saw Carlyle in cloak, sombrero and staff, mooning along our country roads, a tortured mind painfully alone even to the eyes of a boy. He was visiting his brother-in-law, Dr. Aitken, retired, and I always took off my cap to him. I daresay

I paid this homage fifty times, but never was there any response.'

Another merry glimpse is given of the philosopher. An acquaintance of Carlyle, a tradesman in Dumfries and a sufferer from a skin complaint supposed to be a peculiarity of the Scot, one day addressed his famous townsman:

"And what would you say, Mr. Carlyle, is the greatest pleasure in life?" Mr. Carlyle was, as we all know, profoundly learned on the subject, and he replied, "To scratch the place that's itchy." He used a better word than itchy, but only Scots would understand.'

Henry James, too, cannot be named contemporary with James Barrie, for he is mid-Victorian and he and Barrie are, in any case, poles asunder, except in such places as Turkish baths and hair-dressers' shops where all are equal. Fellow-clubmen of the Reform, the elder James drove the younger one into preferring another club to the Liberal stronghold. One thing you can get at the Reform, and that is a hair-cut:

'I naturally clung to that, but, alas, Henry James, who was a true frequenter, clung to it also, and when one is swaddled in that white cloth one wants no friendly neighbour. At such times he and I conversed amiably from our chairs with raging breasts. Then one day I was in Manchester or Liverpool in a big hotel, and it came to me that

now was my chance to get my hair cut in peace. I went downstairs, and just as they enveloped me in the loathly sheet I heard a groan from the adjoining chair and saw that its occupant was James. After a moment, when anything might have happened, we both laughed despairingly, but I think with a plucky sympathy, meaning that fate was too much for us. Later in the day we discussed the matter openly for the first time, but could come to no conclusion for future guidance. Each, however, without making any promise, did something to help. Feeling that I had been driven from society by its greatest ornament I let my hair go its own wild way, and he, though he remained in society, removed his beard, which was what had taken him so often to the salon of the artists. Not that I can claim the beard as a trophy of mine, but he did remove it about that time, and I should have been proud to be the shears, for the result was that at last his full face came into the open, and behold it was fair. One saw at last the lovely smile that had so long lain hidden in the forest.'

Let us eliminate from comparison with masters-to-be the men who are already masters. Likewise the poets, since poetry, in the metrical sense, has never been the Barrie medium. I will also eliminate, for the moment, the playwrights, since young Barrie is not yet a playwright.

Young Kipling, too, young Doyle, Hawkins and Rider Haggard, celebrities all, even then, have their own niches and their own respective styles, different one from the other, and have no part in the Barrie tradition.

Of the Barrie imitators, who were the Kail-yarders, I shall speak later.

This pruning reduces my subjects to some two or three. I choose for comparison the men who I suppose, rightly or wrongly, have only something of the Barrie method and whimsy. It is a thing to remark that these two or three young men are of almost the same vintage; a lustre or thereabouts would cover them. They are, and I have not chosen them lightly as being of the Barrie mould, 'F. Anstey' (Guthrie), Max Beer-bohm, Kenneth Grahame and H. G. Wells.

Two, it will be observed, are, as Barrie, Scots. Unlike Wells, unlike Barrie, who must each earn his living by the pen, the chosen way, the others are almost *dilettante* and amateur in literature, men of private means and, in Grahame's case, of other profession than that of letters.

'F. Anstey' has various fantasies, novels and a play or so to his credit, and yet we must regard him as one who writes for his own amusement, though very much indeed for the amusement of others and greatly to his personal advantage. 'Max,' many have called him inimitable, certainly

was the merest butterfly of a period. Grahame, the typical banker, wrote surely out of a love of letters and without intention of winning popularity, or pence, by his pen. It is vain to speculate what Grahame or Beerbohm would have given further to the world had necessity, or a love of their art, driven them to their desks thereat to earn a living. Amateur or otherwise, all were of a Journalism beginning:

‘That grisette of literature who has a smile and a hand for all beginners, welcoming them at the threshold, teaching them so much that is worth knowing, introducing them to the other lady whom they have worshipped from afar, showing them even how to woo her, and then bidding them a bright God-speed—he were an ingrate who, having had her joyous companionship, no longer flings her a kiss as they pass.’

Barrie, rising from the original jumping-off point of inspiration, to exploit, as journalism, a Lowland Scots village and a Lowland Scots sentiment (gold-mines hitherto unworked, sources untapped), was, by his plays, to declare himself the greatest master of the fantastic since the coming of Bottom, the earliest weaver.

The Thrums books were merely the sparks from a youthful smithy. We will warm our hands there presently. Meantime we will see, if I can but show it, the five young fantastics set side by

side. I do not mean to draw on the Barrie plays in this chapter; I would rather find what I want of Ariel and Lob in books, in the playwright's other art, which he has said he would have preferred to associate himself with entirely had it not been for the insistence of the interested Mr. Frohman. And possibly also the insistence of finance, since 'money may also be a beautiful thing. It is we who make it grimy.'

But, to quit finance for fantasy, I will name at once my, or rather Max's, Lord George Hell and his Jenny of *The Happy Hypocrite*. The author belongs to the graceful school in which Barrie was to be master. Almost can Peter be the Merry Dwarf who with an arrow shot Lord George through his wicked heart. It will, of course, be remembered that of all who revelled with the Regent none was 'half so wicked as Lord George Hell.'

'Of a sudden, something shot sharp into his heart. In pain he sprang to his feet and, as he turned, he seemed to see a winged and laughing child, in whose hand was a bow, fly swiftly away into the darkness. At his side was the Dwarf's chair. It was empty. Only La Gambogi was with him, and her dark face was like the face of a fury.'

Thus, as we know, Lord George, at the Play, turning from La Gambogi, acquired a taste for



Miss Jenny Mere, buns and a manly piety, and so lived happily ever after.

This masterpiece is of the Barrie mode, yet not quite, for it is without sense of tears, and this sense lacking in laughter leaves the latter only laughter, perfect so, no doubt, but never the laughter of an April day. Which is, of all the laughs, the best laugh in the end, since it taps a man where he keeps his tears.

And I turn to Kenneth Grahame for yet another fantasy. There is his *Headswoman*, excellent of its kind and the better in that it might possibly have been true. There have been lady pirates, so why not a lady executioner? But Mademoiselle Jeanne of St. Radegonde is little use to me here, good fantasy though she be. Nor is the mighty Pan, of the *Wind in the Willows*, any relation to Peter. Nor is the *Reluctant Dragon* a reptile of the Crocodile (Hook's crocodile) kind. To compare the two young Scots, Grahame and Barrie, I will look into the former's *Dream Days* and find 'A Saga of the Seas.' Our hero of the story was born ten years before Peter. Both are confirmed killers of pirates:

'Then, rallying round me the remnant of my faithful crew, I selected a fresh cutlass (I had worn out three already) and plunged once more into the pleasing carnage. The result was no longer doubtful. Indeed, I could not allow it to

be, as I was already getting somewhat bored with the pirate business, and was wanting to get on to something more southern and sensuous. All serious resistance came to an end as soon as I had reached the quarter-deck and cut down the pirate chief—a fine black-bearded fellow in his way, but hardly up to date in his parry-and-thrust business. Those whom our cutlasses had spared were marched out along their own plank, in the approved old fashion; and in time the scuppers relieved the decks of the blood that made traffic temporarily impossible. And all the time the British man-of-war admired and applauded in the offing.’

And in the Pirate ship of Mr. Grahame is moreover a ‘Watercress Girl’ who might have come from the far-off pages of *Sunshine*:

‘I came upon her in the big state-cabin in the stern; and she wore a holland pinafore over her Princess-clothes, and she had brown wavy hair, hanging down her back, just like—well, never mind, she had brown wavy hair. When gentle-folk meet, courtesies pass; and I will not weary other people with relating all the compliments and counter-compliments that we exchanged, all in the most approved manner. Occasions like this, when tongues wagged smoothly and speech flowed free, were always especially pleasing to me, who am naturally inclined to be tongue-tied with

women. But at last ceremony was over, and we sat on the table and swung our legs and agreed to be fast friends. And I showed her my latest knife—one-bladed, horn-handled, terrific, hung round my neck with string; and she showed me the chiefest treasures the ship contained, hidden away in a most private and particular locker—a musical box with a glass top that let you see the works, and a railway train with real lines and a real tunnel, and a tin iron-clad that followed a magnet, and was ever so much handier in many respects than the real full-sized thing that still lay and applauded in the offing.’

Just about the same moment, a rather similar scene was being acted in Kensington Gardens:

‘Maimie felt quite shy, but Peter knew not what shy was.

“‘I hope you have had a good night,” he said earnestly.

““Thank you,” she replied, “I was so cosy and warm. But you”—and she looked at his nakedness awkwardly—“don’t you feel the least bit cold?”

‘Now cold was another word Peter had forgotten, so he answered, “I think not, but I may be wrong: you see I am rather ignorant. I am not exactly a boy; Solomon says I am a Betwixt-and-Between.”’

““So that is what it is called,” said Maimie thoughtfully.

““That’s not my name,” he explained, “my name is Peter Pan.”

““Yes, of course,” she said, “I know, everybody knows.”

‘You can’t think how pleased Peter was to learn that all the people outside the gates knew about him. He begged Maimie to tell him what they knew and what they said, and she did so. They were sitting by this time on a fallen tree; Peter had cleared off the snow for Maimie, but he sat on a snowy bit himself.

““Squeeze closer,” Maimie said. . . .

‘She said out of pity for him, “I shall give you a kiss if you like,” but though he once knew, he had long forgotten what kisses are, and he replied, “Thank you,” and held out his hand, thinking she had offered to put something into it. This was a great shock to her, but she felt she could not explain without shaming him, so with charming delicacy she gave Peter a thimble which happened to be in her pocket, and pretended that it was a kiss.’

Mr. Grahame’s hero is the natural boy, Barrie’s is born of Tir-nan-Ogue. The first is eternal, the other, perhaps, immortal.

And before I leave Kensington Gardens, I would say indignantly that the statue of Peter, the Pirate Killer, standing there is an uncommonly bad likeness. When I want to visualise Peter

Pan I seek him in an illustration of Maxfield Parrish. I see him in Mr. Parrish's likeness of Kenneth Grahame's natural boy, the nameless hero of that 'Saga of the Sea' I have quoted, he who cuts down the Pirate Captain in one swithering cutlass flash. The Kensington Gardens Peter is over-niminy-piminy for the boy who struck Hook 'from the lists of man.'

One of my childhood's earliest recollections is concerned with a fantasy. I can recall two young uncles who are jointly and extravagantly reading a book to gusts of laughter. The one who holds the volume finishes a page and, tearing it out, hands it to the other, who cannot wait to hear how Paul Bultitude comes home again. The book they are so foolishly mutilating is, of course, Anstey's *Vice Versa*. Anstey, in the particular line of humour he made his own, is perhaps the greatest master who was ever alive and writing. His humour is as delightful to-day as it was when James Barrie first came to London and, no doubt, read and enjoyed it. It remains as fresh and comfortable as clean linen. It has its minor tragedies (the hopeless love of poor Nebelsen for instance), but always, all ends well, the villain scored off, the hero happy. One need not quote it; it is, I am glad to say, too well known to need an exemplar. It is the fantasy of a sort of heavenly harlequinade.

The Barrie fantasy is as though Columbine, skirted as a white convolvulus, pirouettes through a moonlit garden and kisses her hand to a nightingale.

It may be noticed as a matter of passing interest that each exponent of the fantastic, Anstey and Barrie, in outward personality suggested the other. Each was unlike the typical Scot. Each was dark enough to be a welcome first-footer. Each proved the adage that 'biggest ain't always best.' And both were 'the ones with the thin, bright faces.'

I am quoting here, as far as may be, from the books and not from the plays. I am quoting the work of young authors of the last century's end. Julie Logan was created in 1931, but only a young man, or one without age, could have created her. So I make no bones about quoting her as the work of youth:

'When I got outside, something made me reluctant to make straight for the manse. I sat down very melancholy by the little round of water I have spoken of. The night was forlorn, with the merest rim of the moon in sight, and no reflection on the water beyond some misty stars. I don't know why I sat there. It was not to keep vigil; I am sure I had no suspicion that Miss Julie Logan was still in the house.

'I may have been there a considerable time

# Farewell, Miss Julie Logan.

A Wintery Tale.

I — The English

This is Dec 1, 186-; I think it prudent to go no nearer to the date, in case what I am writing with ~~the same pen~~ <sup>ink</sup> should take an ill turn or fall into the wrong hands. I need not be so guarded about the weather. It is a night of sudden blasts that half an hour ago threw my window at me, and <sup>they</sup> went skimming from room to room, like officers of the law seeking to seize and deliver to justice the worthless man who is sitting here ready to write about warlike and war-like on common paper. There was another blast (the new). I believe I could agree the words of the nurse to my laddie to night, and by running from door to door, grinning and shutting, become the conductor of a very winter orchestra.

It is a very warm picture I am giving of my self and my man. <sup>And that I have the shutters up,</sup> I am really sitting very cosy into my fire, letting the winds bluster as they will. and <sup>this</sup> <sup>plush</sup> is my comfort. Kristin, against lobby walls as she comes

First page of the MS. of 'Farewell, Miss Julie Logan' (1931);  
written with the left hand





and that what I saw in the water was just a reflection come trailing back from other days. I took a step or two to make sure about this, and then all the men in the water suddenly stood still, with their hands on dirk or broadsword. I thought they had heard a disquieting sound, and then I knew that what they heard had been my own movement. After that I sat very mouse, looking at nothing but the reflection. I was sure now that, despite the dancing, it was a gathering of the hunted folk as stealthy as the night itself.

‘I had never lost a feeling that there was an air of expectancy about them. I saw them backing against the walls to leave more space in the middle, and all eyes turned to the door, as if awaiting a great person. I suppose the tune was still dirling in my head, for I thought I knew who was coming in, the captain of them all, and I had a sinking that it would be my duty to seize him and hand him over. But it was a woman, it was Miss Julie Logan. She was not finely attired like the other ladies, but so poorly that her garments were in tatters. She would have made a braver show if each of the ladies had torn off an oddment and made a frock for her between them. It was not, however, as one of little account that they treated her or she treated them. She was the one presence in the hall to them. They approached her singly and as if overpowered by the distinction

that was befalling them. The men made profound obeisance, and the ladies sank in that lovely way to the floor. On some she smiled and let them salute her hand, and others she looked at in a way I did not see, but they backed from her as if she had put the fear of Death into them. She gave the back of her hand to Mistress Lindinock, and I never saw an old woman so gratified.'

I turn, with a slight shudder, to what is fantastic in Mr. Wells. He is as scientific as surgery, his fantasies are as scientific as are the hateful experiments of his hateful Dr. Moreau. He has his kindlier moments, naturally, when he trifles with mermaids and angels from the spheres of Art. But on the whole his tastes are towards intellectual nightmare. I quote from the *Time Machine*, an invention which, do you press a lever, will make you to travel backwards or forwards in Time. The Time traveller goes back to the earth's beginning:

'The machine was standing on a sloping beach. The sea stretched away to the south-west, to rise into a sharp bright horizon against the wan sky. There were no breakers and no waves, for not a breath of wind was stirring. Only a slight oily swell rose and fell like a gentle breathing, and showed that the eternal sea was still moving and living. And along the margin where the water

sometimes broke was a thick incrustation of salt—pink under the lurid sky. There was a sense of oppression in my head, and I noticed that I was breathing very fast. The sensation reminded me of my only experience of mountaineering, and from that I judged the air to be more rarefied than it is now.

‘Far away up the desolate slope I heard a harsh scream, and saw a thing like a huge white butterfly go slanting and fluttering up into the sky and, circling, disappear over some low hillocks beyond. The sound of its voice was so dismal that I shivered and seated myself more firmly upon the machine. Looking round me again, I saw that, quite near, what I had taken to be a reddish mass of rock was moving slowly towards me. Then I saw the thing was really a monstrous crab-like creature. Can you imagine a crab as large as yonder table, with its many legs moving slowly and uncertainly, its big claws swaying, its long antennae, like carters’ whips, waving and feeling, and its stalked eyes gleaming at you on either side of its metallic front? Its back was corrugated and ornamented with ungainly bosses, and a greenish incrustation blotched it here and there. I could see the many palps of its complicated mouth flickering and feeling as it moved.

‘As I stared at this sinister apparition crawling towards me, I felt a tickling on my cheek as

though a fly had lighted there. I tried to brush it away with my hand, but in a moment it returned, and almost immediately came another by my ear. I struck at this, and caught something threadlike. It was drawn swiftly out of my hand. With a frightful qualm, I turned and saw that I had grasped the antenna of another monster crab that stood just behind me. Its evil eyes were wriggling on their stalks, its mouth was all alive with appetite, and its vast ungainly claws, smeared with an algal slime, were descending upon me. In a moment my hand was on the lever, and I had placed a month between myself and these monsters.'

We are, on the whole, safer I fancy in Kensington Gardens:

'But you must not think that, because somewhere among the trees the little house is twinkling, it is a safe thing to remain in the Gardens after Lockout time. If the bad ones among the fairies happen to be out that night they will certainly mischief you, and even though they are not, you may perish of cold and dark before Peter Pan comes round. He has been too late several times, and when he sees he is too late he runs back to the Thrush's Nest for his paddle, of which Maimie had told him the true use, and he digs a grave for the child and erects a little tombstone, and carves the poor thing's initials on it. He does this at

once because he thinks it is what real boys would do, and you must have noticed the little stones, and that there are always two together. He puts them in twos because they seem less lonely. I think that quite the most touching sight in the Gardens is the two tombstones of Walter Stephen Matthews and Phoebe Phelps. They stand together at the spot where the parish of Westminster St. Mary's is said to meet the parish of Paddington. Here Peter found the two babes, who had fallen unnoticed from their perambulators, Phoebe aged thirteen months and Walter probably still younger, for Peter seems to have felt a delicacy about putting any age on his stone. They lie side by side, and the simple inscriptions read

W. St. M.	and	13a P. P. 1841.
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'David sometimes places white flowers on these two innocent graves.'

Anstey and Grahame have passed on and, now, Barrie has joined them. We may, perhaps, say of James Barrie, as a spinner of the rainbow webs of fantasy, what Matey said of Lob: 'He was all that's left of Merry England, that little man.' And he was a Scot!

## CHAPTER V

IN what has gone immediately before, I have looked back to the younger purveyors of fantasy as they were in the nineties or just about then. An era in literature was passing, a heyday of letters which had not been since the heyday of the Elizabethans. I do not imply that those who wrote were all outstanding men of the pen, but that, taking them all in all, they commanded an interest, they commanded a popular respect, which authors, as a body, have not enjoyed since. Possibly the period began to end, reaction to set in, at the Old Bailey, in 1895, when Mr. Wilde left the box after his cross-examination by Mr. Carson.

The 1900's came in with the death of the Great Queen. The world began to be a new one. M. Blériot presently flew the Channel. Senator Marconi, at Wimereux on the Channel coast, was stirring up the atmospheric waves with a long pole. Dr. Crippen, a murderer who has ever had my sympathy, was, by means of the new wireless, arrested and hanged. Scott was making the dark South epic and sublime.

And, in letters, among the changes of fashion, the popularity of the Kailyard waned. But another door was in process of opening to the chief delver in that once prolific garden. J. M. Barrie, the journalist and author, was becoming a playwright, becoming also one of the most prosperous literary men of the day. The earlier plays may be said to have been born, mostly, of the novels. *Walker, London*, is of *When a Man's Single*; *The Little Minister* is but dramatised Thrums; and *Peter Pan* was picked up by *The Little White Bird* in Kensington Gardens.

In arriving at the affluence of the theatre (in 1903 Barrie had three West End successes running at once: *Quality Street*, *Little Mary* and *The Admirable Crichton*) the new playwright had, since his arrival in London, suffered few set-backs.

It seems, apropos of *Little Mary*, that the author had a collaborator. Said he to a small boy of six who sat up in bed one evening to eat chocolates, 'If you eat so many chocolates you will be sick to-morrow.' 'I shall be sick to-night.' was the prompt reply. This dialogue went into the play, and, recognising his line, the creator claimed his just rights—a halfpenny per diem during the run. The agreement was duly recorded, and is reproduced in *The Greenwood Hat*.

But we know that, following his initial success with 'The Rooks,' 'Anon' had fourteen articles

rejected before a second acceptance came along. Frederick Greenwood of the *St. James's Gazette* was the author's likeliest buyer:

‘The rows of subjects that Greenwood passed as possibles and were no more heard of, and the rows he put that pen of his through and were promptly posted to him, no Hat could have held them. He never complained on this score, but he was sometimes nervous over articles which meant the reverse of what they seemed to say, a kind of writing that the imp referred to was constantly egging Anon to write. These brought many letters to the harassed editor from puzzled readers, Greenwood liked to get correspondence as the result of articles, but not letters (mostly in a feminine hand) that raged. The only editor Anon ever had who liked that kind of provocative article was Henley. There was one in the *St. James's* telling of a journalist who had written so many articles about the Jubilee that when told to write another he retired to the study and shot himself. This was accepted in some quarters as news, and a provincial paper commenting on it called it one of the saddest affairs connected with the Jubilee. More severe language was used about another in which Anon described himself as having been so pestered by the Waits that he buried them in Brunswick Square. One of the letters passed on by Greenwood to the author said of



this, "The most cold-blooded murder I ever read about, and the writer shows no contrition." "

But surely no reader, even a contemporary one, could take the bloodthirsty Anon seriously? The outrage surely was that he should pin a jest to the Waits, a subject as ancient as the lodger, the mother-in-law or the minor insects of Margate. There were many such letters as the above, and Greenwood maintained that every outraged reader represented at least a dozen more.

Anon, as has been told, when hard pressed even wrote what are called 'informative' articles. Many of these were about his doings in distant climes, his adventures there, and his occupations, though had he taken time to reflect he must have known that he had never left his native island. One audacious series of the kind described his experiences in India as a civil engineer, when, among other deeds, he bridged the Irrawaddy, with fifteen thousand coolies under his command: 'I re-read this lately and found it engrossing; my present-day knowledge of India indeed is largely founded on my recollection of such articles. They fascinated Greenwood, who probably wanted to know about India also, and though he was a little scared of the Irrawaddy, he took some more about Anon as second in command of a convict settlement on the Andaman Islands. The series ended with a stern indictment of the Government for

paying Anon his pension in rupees. Many retired Civil servants wrote to join in this fight for justice, and thanked the anonymous writer warmly. After this Greenwood let him have his head.'

The pay was poor, £2, 2s. an article. So poor was it that 'Anon,' or J. M. Barrie, began to use sub-titles. He had discovered that a sub-title was worth an extra sixpence. Long afterwards he was to learn that 'our beloved editor had understood from the first what the hungry Scot was up to and never let on.'

But every extra sixpence was a step to a banking account, which no literary hand should be without. Up till now their recipient had been content to cash Mr. Greenwood's cheques and put the proceeds into his waistcoat pocket, wherein was a hole through which the coins 'forced a way into the lining and ran round me like mice in a wall. To get at them I had to tilt myself to this side and that, much as we used to play the game of pigs in clover, and often (even in public places) with the same result—defeat at the sty. Instead of paying my creditors promptly, I had to invite them to listen while I gave myself a jerk.'

So a bank account was opened and, as the Kailyard began to pay regular dividends, Mr. Barrie no doubt became a worth while constituent to the 'Bank in Pall Mall East.'

And he owed his early affluence to the inspiration of his native town and to a sentiment which genius and sincerity saved, very nearly entirely, from being a mawkish one. *Auld Licht Idylls*, a reprint of those two-guinea articles, published in 1888, was the first seller. Barrie (one swallow does not make a Thrummer) was soon to have his imitators. But at first he had the yard to himself—grey, flat and monotonous. He took from it entirely *The Idylls*, *A Window in Thrums*, *The Little Minister*, *Sentimental Tommy* and *Margaret Ogilvy*. He took from it, in part, *Tommy and Grizel* and *When a Man's Single*.

The public, the English public, welcomed the new departure; the young author became known and nearly famous.

There was also *My Lady Nicotine*, a famous fictional eulogy of a real tobacco which Sir James Barrie may have bought to the day of his death if he had not been made a freeman of the blend long ago. *My Lady Nicotine*—it treated a little of the Thames—ranked in popularity with *Three Men in a Boat* and exceeded in sales that other Thames masterpiece, *In a Canadian Canoe*, which is the one of the above three that I can best read to-day. I cannot now laugh at the adventures of Harris, George and 'J,' to say nothing of Montmorency. But when first I met them they gave me the convulsions. I can read *My Lady Nicotine*

among her contemporaries, but a little of her goes a long way. Or perhaps I mean that a little of her takes me a long way back. There is still, however, in *My Lady Nicotine* the freshness of morning along with the letters of Primus to his uncle:

‘DEAR UNCLE,

Though I have not written to you for a long time I often think about you and Mr. Gilray and the rest and the Arcadia Mixture, and I beg to state that my mother will have informed you I am well and happy but a little overworked, as I am desirous of pleasing my preceptor by obtaining a credible position in the exams and we breakfast at 7.30 sharp. I suppose you are to give me a six-shilling thing again as a Christmas present, so I drop you a line not to buy something I don’t want, as it is only thirty-nine days to Christmas. I think I’ll have a book again but not a fairy tale or any of that sort, nor the *Swiss Family Robinson*, nor any of the old books. There is a rattling story called *Kidnapped*, by H. Rider Haggard, but it is only five shillings, so if you thought of it you could make up the six shillings by giving me a football belt. Last year you gave me *The Formation of Character*, and I read it with great mental improvement and all that, but this time I want a change, namely, (1) not a fairy tale, (2) not an old book, (3) not mental improvement book. Don’t

fix on anything without telling me first what it is. Tell William John I walked into Darky and settled him in three rounds. Best regards to Mr. Gilray and the others.

‘DEAR UNCLE,

‘*November 19th.*

Our preceptor is against us writing letters he doesn't see, so I have to carry the paper to the dormitory up my waistcoat and write there, and I wish old Poppy smoked the Arcadia Mixture to make him more like you. Never mind about the football belt, as I got Johnny Fox's for two white mice; so I don't want *Kidnapped*, which I wrote about to you, as I want you to stick to a six-shilling book. There is one called *Dead Man's Rock* that Dickson Secundus has heard about, and it sounds well; but it is never safe to go by the name, so don't buy it till I hear more about it. If you see biographies of it in the newspapers you might send them to me, as it should be about pirates by the title, but the author does not give his name, which is rather suspicious. So, remember, don't buy it yet, and also find out the price, whether illustrated, and how many pages. Ballantyne's story this year is about the fire-brigade; but I don't think I'll have it as he is getting rather informative, and I have one of his about the fire-brigade already. Of course I don't fix not to have it, only don't buy it at present. Don't buy *Dead*

*Man's Rock* either. I am working diligently, and tell the housekeeper my socks is all right. We may fix on *Dead Man's Rock*, but it is best not to be in a hurry.

‘November 24th.

‘DEAR UNCLE,

I don't think I'll have *Dead Man's Rock*, as Hope has two stories out this year, and he is a safe man to go to. The worst of it is that they are three-and-six each, and Dickson Secundus says that they are continuations of each other, so it is best to have them both or neither. The two at three-and-six would make 7s., and I wonder if you would care to go to that length this year. I am getting on first-rate with my Greek, and will do capital if my health does not break down with over-pressure. Perhaps if you bought the two you would get them for 6s. 6d. Or what do you say to the housekeeper's giving a shilling of it, and not sending the neckties?

‘November 26th.

‘DEAR UNCLE,

I was disappointed at not hearing from you this morning, but conclude you are very busy. I don't want Hope's books, but I think I'll rather have a football.'

There is originality here too. I think that Primus is the first of us to say it in the epistolary?

But Primus has me wondering a little. Is there another Hope than Anthony? If so his sequel would be to *The Prisoner of Zenda*, *Rupert of Hentzau*; and Flavia was not reigning in Zenda till some years subsequent to the coming of the Arcadia Mixture. Apart from Primus, the Arcadian humour is not what we have learnt, in later years, to call Barrie. It is bludgeon rather than rapier. Good bludgeon all the same:

‘It was my pipe that carried me to my prettiest compliment. Having exposed it in some prominent place where it could hardly escape notice, I take measures for ensuring a visit from a lady, young, graceful, and accomplished. Or I have it ready for a chance visitor. On her arrival, I conduct her to a seat near my pipe. It is not good to hurry on to the repartee at once; so I talk for a time of the weather, the theatres, the new novel. I keep my eye on her; and by and by she begins to look about her. She observes the strange-looking pipe. Now is the critical moment. It is possible that she may pass it by without remark, in which case all is lost; but experience has shown me that four times out of six she touches it in assumed horror, to pass some humorous remark. Off tumbles the bowl. “Oh,” she exclaims, “see what I have done! I am so sorry!” I pull myself together. “Madam,” I reply calmly and bowing low, “what else was to be expected? You came

near my pipe—and it lost its head!” She blushes, but cannot help being pleased; and I set my pipe for the next visitor.’

*My Lady Nicotine* is dated as a work of humour by (if by nothing else) the pleasantry which supposes a wife forbidding tobacco to her husband. An exercise in the facetious which reached its apogee, and shortly afterwards died, with the young Kipling’s ‘Betrothed.’ The conceit is a purely Saxon one, and its use marks the further Anglicising of Mr. Barrie, whose early taste for cricket was the first indication of the declension to be.

As a guide to the popularity of *My Lady Nicotine* it is sufficient to say that a Mr. Yapp, who owned the original of the Arcadian, a brand I believe called Black Cat, for which he had paid £3000, was able (owing to the public assurance of the author that Mr. Yapp’s and no other was the one and only Arcadian) to sell his business for £100,000.

The Thrums epoch was over in 1900. It had made literary history. Its conception was one of those lucky strokes which are called genius. The Thrums books were acclaimed by all the better great men of that moment. It is useless to speculate as to how they would be received to-day. They are forty years old. Forty years ago people were alive who remembered the times and the



sort of lives of which the author told. He himself was born on the fringes of those days, he was not personally of them. The days dealt with lie between 1830 and 1865. When James Barrie began to put them on paper, in the early 'eighties, they were still the yesterdays of many, and of Margaret Barrie in particular, who remembered those yesterdays as clearly as burn water.

I do not believe that the young readers of to-day read the Thrums books. I do not think that those who read them forty years ago read them now. And yet there may be a few who do, since

The artless, ageless things they say  
Are fresh as May's own flowers,

and possibly because the humour which plays in and out of the pages is different to the humour of other men. Also because the books have what is called 'genius'—only no one can define genius any more than Barrie's Edinburgh student with the squeaky voice could define the infinite.

Judges have held that *Sentimental Tommy* and *Margaret Ogilvy* are best of the Thrums sequence. All may be called autobiographical in the greater degree or the lesser. Even when these two books came hot from the press, and within a few months of each other (*Margaret* doubtless anxious to share in *Tommy's* solid success), there were those who said that the great days of Dickens and Thackeray

were for ever gone. ““Answer me,” demands a critic of *Tommy*, “what has happened to literature of late?” No reply forthcoming, the critic supplies one. “Literature is moribund: of giants I am sorry to report a total dearth.” Yet in the wilderness he proceeds to find an infant Hercules—J. M. Barrie.

*Sentimental Tommy* is a study of the artistic temperament from infancy up. Tommy Sandys is an Angus lad who lives in London with his widowed mother, *née* Jean Myles of Thrums. Jean dies and sends Tommy and his little sister to Kirriemuir to be the wards of Aaron Latta, her first love. I might apply to Jean the words which Adam Weir of Hermiston, the Lord Justice-Clerk, applied to his deceased wife, Mistress Jean Weir: ‘Puir bitch, she was a dwaibly body from the first.’ Jean Myles is just so, just such a pious, fushionless quean. She had, contrary entirely to feminine nature, allowed herself to be taken out of Latta’s arms by the blustering bully she weds. Aaron, it will be remembered, has walked out with Jean to the Cuttle Well in Glen Quharity. Arrived there, Aaron, as Orlando, writes, ‘wi’ a stick,’ his Jean’s potential name on the margin of the spring—‘Jean Latta,’ he writes.

‘We was so ta’en up with oursel’s that we saw nobody coming, and all at once there was your father by the side o’ us! “You’ve written the

wrong name, Aaron," he said, jeering and pointing with his foot at the letters; "it should be Jean Sandys."

'Aaron said not a word, but I had a presentiment of ill, and I cried, "Dinna let him change the name, Aaron!" Your father had been to change it himsel', but at that he had a new thait, and he said, "No, I'll no do it; your brave Aaron shall do it for me."

'Laddie, it doesna do for a man to be a coward afore a woman that's fond o' him. A woman will thole a man's being anything except like hersel'. When I was sure Aaron was a coward I stood still as death, waiting to ken wha's I was to be. Aaron did it.'

So Magerful Tam Sandys gets Jean—according to the way of J. M. Barrie. In real life no loving lass worth keeping would have been parted, on such a cause, from her so dear weakling, from her Aaron who quite evidently needed, desperately, a woman to mother him. But Mr. Barrie played her false forty years ago, she's past crying for now and we must accept her and Tommy as we find them.

Alive, Jean Sandys had kept Thrums before Tommy's eyes; she had also (again, I think, unnaturally) kept herself before the eyes of Aaron. She writes to a friend in Thrums, 'a woman who was gey cruel to me':

‘My dear Esther, I send you these few scrapes to let you see I have not forgot you, though my way is now grand by yours. A spleet new black silk, Esther, being the second in a twelvemonth, as I’m a living woman. The other is no none tashed yet, but my gudeman fair insisted on buying a new one, for says he, “Rich folk like us can afford to be mislaird, and nothing’s ower braw for my bonny Jean.” Tell Aaron Latta that. When I’m sailing in my silks, Esther, I sometimes picture you turning your wincey again, for I’se uphaud that’s all the new frock you’ve ha’en the year. I dinna want to gie you a scunner of your man, Esther, more by token they said if your mither had not took him in hand you would never have kent the colour of his nightcap, but when you are wraxing ower your kail-pot in a plot of heat, just picture me ringing the bell for my servant, and saying, with a wave of my hand, “Servant, lay the dinner.” And ony afternoon when your man is cleaning out stables and you’re at the tub in a short gown, picture my man taking me and the children out a ride in a carriage, and I sair doubt your bairns was never in nothing more genteel than a coal cart. For bairns is yours, Esther, and children is mine, and that’s a burn without a brig till’t.

‘Deary me, Esther, what with one thing and another, namely, buying a sofa, thirty shillings

as I'm a sinner, I have forgot to tell you about my second, and it's a girl this time, my man saying he would like a change. We have christened her Elspeth after my grandmamma, and if my auld granny's aye living, you can tell her that's her. My man is terribly windy of his two beautiful children, but he says he would have been the happiest gentleman in London though he had just had me, and really his fondness for me, it cows, Esther, sitting aside me on the bed, two pounds without the blankets, about the time Elspeth was born, and feeding me with the fat of the land, namely, tapiocas and sherry wine. Tell Aaron Latta that.

'I pity you from the bottom of my heart, Esther, for having to bide in Thrums, but you have never seen no better, your man having neither the siller nor the desire to take you jaunts, and I'm thinking that is just as well, for if you saw how the like of me lives it might disgust you with your own bit house. I often laugh, Esther, to think that I was once like you, and looked upon Thrums as a bonny place. How is the old hole? My son makes grand sport of the onfortunate bairns as has to bide in Thrums, and I see him doing it the now to his favourite companion, which is a young gentleman of ladylike manners, as bides in our terrace. So no more at present, for my man is sitting ganting for my society, and

I daresay yours is crying to you to darn his old socks. Mind and tell Aaron Latta.'

Now, I can see Jean wishing to rub her, so fine, sham ladyship in to Esther Auld, but not into Aaron to whom she is still true—'after her fashion.' Aaron himself is a little overmuch for me. He acquiesces in the above substitution of 'Sandys' for 'Latta,' and yet has the guts to turn up to the Sandys-Myles wedding dressed for a funeral and is playboy, and unkind enough, being 'apt at the substitution,' to initiate the substituting of the Thrums hearse for the Sandys wedding-coach. The author deprecates Latta's conduct, it is true, and says that Aaron had no part, beyond that of example, in the arrival of a hearse for two. But I feel that he *had*, since he would hardly have been admittedly guilty of the first lack of taste had he not had a hand in the other. He was well-to-do, moreover, and *somebody* must have guaranteed payment for the substituted hearse. The guarantee of the 'idle lads' would not have been, I feel, accepted by the proprietor.

But Jean is dead, and Tommy and his sister Elspeth go to Thrums, go to the care of Aaron. Thrums has been the land of promise to Tommy ever since he had ears to hear of it. Thrums is a disappointment, as is the habit of most promised lands when duly achieved. But one of the pleasantest chapters in the book is the chapter

in which Tommy's dreams of Thrums are dispelled.

As a contrast to Tommy (who I fear is growing up to be, as indeed it was to turn out, a 'Signor Feedle-eerie') we have Grizel, the daughter of the Painted Lady. Mother and daughter are the best portrayed of the fictional ladies of Barrie portraiture. The stage ladies are in altogether another gallery; they have no real part in Thrums.

The book is a finely conceived picture of a genius in the making, of a boy sure to 'find a w'y,' and it has no loose ends. Its method is sure and calculated and balanced—here is a laugh and there a tear. The three principal people, Tommy, Grizel and Elspeth, play bonnily into each other's hands. Their story centres, of course, upon the unhappy love-affair of Latta and Jean to which I have alluded. Around the principal theme are the stories of Miss Ailie, the schoolmistress, and of the Painted Lady. The boyish mind of Tommy is painted with a luminous simplicity, and Tommy stands out in an age which gave us *Wee Willie Winkie*, *Harold* (of the *Golden Age*) and *Dickie Bultitude* and his friends.

Tommy is a Scots boy with an inclination to dream himself to greatness in Art and with the will to aspire. We see him in the words of Cathro, the dominie, who describes how Tommy wore the mourning clothes of Master Lewis Doig and

mourned on behalf of Lewis for the latter's father ('buried jimply a fortnight since'), the bereft Lewis meanwhile enjoying himself at kickbonnety.

"And what payment," asked McLean, laughing, "did Tommy demand from Lewis for this service?"

"Not a farthing, sir—which gives another uncanny glint into his character. When he wants money, there's none so crafty at getting it, but he did this for the pleasure of the thing, or, as he said to Lewis, 'to feel what it would be like.' That, I tell you, is the nature of the sacket; he has a devouring desire to try on other folk's feelings, as if they were so many suits of clothes."

Grizel is a downright and forthright little girl, 'the truth is all she wanted,' an obstinate brat, a dour brat. And as to Grizel, she being, at the age of thirteen, sensible and plucky enough to lay out her dead mother's body unaided, I wonder would such a child have thought to write 'a letter to God' commending the soul of the poor little butterfly to His keeping?

The story takes Tommy to an age when, failing of a bursary, he must go to earn his living on the land. The sequel, written four years later, *Tommy and Grizel*, shows Tommy, the farming laid aside for London journalism and successful authorship, become the literary lion of an unreal Mayfair, and a poor enough creature otherwise.



One feels that his creator did rightly by him (possibly he did not know what else to do), when he allows Tommy to hang himself accidentally and in two brief paragraphs. And so good-night to 'Signor Feedle-eerie.'

'Grizel lived on at Double Dykes in the old way. She was too strong and fine a nature to succumb. Even her brightness came back to her; they sometimes wondered at the serenity of her face. Some still thought her a little stand-offish, for, though the pride had gone from her walk, a distinction of manner grew upon her and made her seem a finer lady than before. There was no other noticeable change except that with the years she lost her beautiful contours and became a little angular; the old maid's figure I believe it is sometimes called. She lived so long after Tommy that she was almost a middle-aged woman when she died.'

To show contemporary opinions of *Tommy* I have made a composite review from the more important Press notices of him which appeared on publication:

'The phenomenal success of Mr. Barrie's books is a healthy and hopeful sign of the times. There could not well be a greater contrast to all that we call "decadent" and "*fin de siècle*," than is supplied by his work. And whilst other novelists are winning their successes by telling us that the

“old order” has had its day, it is somewhat reassuring to find genius of the brightest enlisted on the side of that old order. It is probable that, in order to be healthy, literature must be catholic, experimental—a free expression of the workings of the human mind. It deals legitimately with new, even with daring, phrases of thought. But there are those among us who recognise in certain tenets of the old order the very rock on which our social life is founded. To these tenets has Mr. Barrie ever been true—a fact which, at a period when individualism at war with the social order has become too much a favourite subject with our novelists, would suffice of itself to give to works such as his an unique and special value.

‘It is not ungraciously, but rather from a sense of Mr. Barrie’s great accomplishment in the book—a book which, through its insight into character and especially its “fundamental brainwork,” must be ranked in another and higher category than his other works—that we touch upon a radical defect, as we think, in *Sentimental Tommy*. It is a defect which to some extent will disappear with the appearance of the promised sequel. All along, indeed, we have imagined Mr. Barrie saying, “Wait until I have written the history of Tommy’s further career, and you will see that I justify my warnings about the break-down in his manhood.” We are awaiting the sequel with

interest and the highest expectations. But the sequel cannot supply a foil for Tommy in his boyhood on Tommy's own plane. And if it be objected that that is impossible in the nature of the case, what is that but stating another side of the defect—that Mr. Barrie has confined himself to a field where there is no passionate incident for the romance of psychology? Least of all can the sequel, however convincingly it may show us the sentimental qualities leading Tommy to ruin, justify the attitude of scorn, aversion, merciless rancour we have called it, taken up by Mr. Barrie to Sentimental Tommy the boy—an attitude upon which, rather than upon any one thing Mr. Barrie says, we base our contention that his book is radically wrong and unjust. Not that we need think the aversion and the scorn unnatural. Who more likely at times to feel them than the genius himself, who observes, and colours his observation with sentiment, and is able then to stand aside and watch himself at the process?

‘Mr. Barrie is not only subtle in the constitution of his story, thus, but he is a master of mechanical device. He shows it in the use he makes of Thrums folk in London, to interpret Jean's story for us, and to harrow her with it, through the mouth of unsuspecting Tommy; and in the interplay of the London and Thrums elements in Tommy himself—his boasts of Thrums

to Shovel, and of Shovel to the Thrummies, the better to reveal him to us, and the more to enrich him for that revelation; and, again, in the directer elucidation of him by the skilful introduction of old Blinder, and McLean, and, above all, of Cathro. And even the introduction of the Painted Lady, if it is to be counted a mechanical device (although we do not think that it is) has a relevance to the main theme which preserves it from artificiality.

‘The execution of the story, so subtly and skilfully designed, reflects all the qualities of the writer displayed in his previous books: his keen observation, his delight in ruminating over his observed facts, his alternating humour and pathos, his fun, his literary instinct, his instinct for literary finish; and reflects them more brilliantly than ever. These find expression in a method that is sure, calculating, not very generous or passionate, and with indeed a certain smallness in it. It is not niggling, for Mr. Barrie has a big, sure touch; but it is big in little, reminding us most, perhaps, of the art of certain old Flemish masters of painting, with their small and highly finished canvases, great technically, but wanting in sweep and largeness.

‘And on this account *Sentimental Tommy* is not a book to be devoured, but one to be read slowly, with an eye that surely notes all the points that

are surely noted by the writer. Else, it were an injustice to Mr. Barrie's patient art.

'It was with a shock of relief and delight that I came upon the penultimate chapter and read how Tommy lost the Hugh Blackadder prize for a Scotch essay, and all because of his devoted search for the *mot propre*; and I can only hope that its moral will not be utterly lost in Edinburgh where, I understand, the professors who considered Professor Blackie a great man are still hesitating over the propriety of erecting a memorial to Stevenson!

'But this boyish and unconscious honesty towards the half-divined ideals of art is, as far as I can discover, the one and only moral beauty which Mr. Barrie conceded to Tommy's temperament. Now, all poets and novelists, perhaps, and certainly all who touch the human heart as Mr. Barrie touches it, must possess that temperament in some degree; and, while following this tale, I could not help asking myself, "Is there not a trace of almost Puritanical bitterness in this contemptuous and unrelenting exposure of the poor, unreal, self-deluding soul?" One might almost fancy that Mr. Barrie had looked deep into his own nature, and—as we all feel most bitterly towards the weaknesses from which we have most narrowly escaped, thanks to training and the character which training gives—that he had

written this book in a mood of indignant revulsion from the picture of a soul which, but for happy circumstances, happy influences, might have been his own. I entreat you not to misunderstand this point, which I find a peculiarly delicate one to convey. But a first-rate artist has understanding both of good and evil, and I doubt if we admirers ever recognise the extent to which, even in depicting vice and crime, he draws upon the wisdom of his own heart. It was not by amassing documents that Shakespeare saw into the springs which moved Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, nor from criminal records, alone or chiefly, that Balzac painted his "Vautrin." In Dmitri Roudine, so high of purpose, yet so futile in action, the good Tourgueneff exhibits to us a facet of his own nature. But in *Sentimental Tommy* one seems to detect an impatience accompanying the exhibition—a sort of scornful shame which constrains the author, as if in self-mortification, to avert his eyes from possibly the pleasanter features of Tommy's character. I do not, therefore, find Tommy incomplete. I find him almost distressingly complete and life-like. But I warn the reader that he does not embrace the complete artistic temperament, and express the final word upon it; and that in real life genius and character are not necessarily antithetical, as we have only to turn to our

Lives of Milton, of Johnson, or of Scott to discover.

'It was necessary, I suppose, and part of the *donnée* of the tale, that sorrow and suffering—other people's sorrow and suffering—should go to the making of that fine fellow Tommy Sandys, who grew up to write books so eloquent of sorrows and sufferings he had never felt at first hand. Yet I think some of the pathos of this book might have been spared; the early death, for instance, of the little girl who passes in and out of Chapter I like the child of a dream; and perhaps—after reading it I have not the heart to speak more decidedly—the lamentable history of Miss Kitty: but not—of this I am certain—the tale of Grizel. For that, and not the heroical career of Tommy, is the crown of the book. "I'm not sure what I'm laughing at," said Tommy, on one famous occasion, "but I think it's at myself." The author adds: "The joke grew with the years, until sometimes he laughed in his most emotional moments, suddenly seeing himself in his true light. But it had become a bitter laugh by this time." And we foretaste that bitterness as we read. The tale of Grizel, on the other hand, contains no bitterness, and its humour (let the reader turn to the chapter headed "Grizel Pays Three Visits") lies too deep for laughter.'

But the pleasantest thing of all about these

books is, I think, the temper in which the work is done. One might safely predict that here was an author who would be true to his own ideal; that he would not swerve from truth of representation to produce mere prettiness, nor yet overstep the modesty of nature to arrest attention. It is pleasant, above all, to think that life may be looked fairly and squarely in the face, and the truth told about it without offence to any instinct or sentiment that deserves protection, and that human misery, and squalor even, may be envisaged with the deepest and most understanding pity, which yet has no kinship with despair. A literature could hardly be in decadence which bore such flowers as this.

In another vein I find the elegant and fiery Mr. Cunninghame Graham, last of the Scottish Cavaliers (and cavillers), declaring, in the *Spectator*:

‘If it pleases Mr. Barrie to represent that half of the population of his native land is imbecile, the fault is his. But for the idiots, the precentors, elders of churches, the “select men,” and those landward folk who have been dragged of late into publicity, I compassionate them, knowing their language has been distorted, and they themselves been rendered such abject snivellers, that not a henwife, shepherd, ploughman or anyone who thinks in “guid braid Scots” would recognise



himself dressed in the motley which it has been the pride of the kailyard writers to bestow. Neither would I have Englishmen believe that the entire Scotch nation is composed of ministers, elders, and maudlin whiskified physicians, nor even of precentors who, as we know, are employed in Scotland to put the congregation out by starting hymns on the wrong note, or in a key impossible for any but themselves to compass.'

But James Barrie has never 'distorted' the Lowland Scots language whatever else he may have wrung from it.

*Margaret Ogilvy*, a tribute to the author's mother, and potentially to the mother of each reader, went quickly into five editions. I have quoted from it throughout this book. Its adverse critics, for there were a few, held it for a want of taste that a son should write intimately of his dead relative so that he might fill his pockets thereby. I have heard the same criticism levelled at two very recent publications. It is an unreasonable one; the departed, Margaret most of all, would see it well enough and be glad among the asphodel that a kindly recollection or so should profit one of the family still in the material.

The *Little Minister* I have referred to, as I have to *Margaret Ogilvy*. To me the story of Gavin Dishart, Minister in Thrums, is but a study, in 130,000 words, for the masterpiece which, forty

years afterwards, was to be fitted into 10,000. Babbie is but the elaborate crystal from which that exquisite gem Julie is to dance for a moment and be gone. Adam Yestreen is Gavin Dishart without the handicap of a Jean Myles sort of mother in his manse. Anybody can recognise him. But do you want to find Babbie in Branders, the Babbie who, for two long chapters, plays fairy godmother in the mud house of 'flabby-faced' Nanny Webster, you'll find her, the dross of Thrums sloughed, as the stranger 'howdie' who attended the labour of Joanna Routh. The stranger who was like a squirrel, in Joanna's words, who was like 'the little gentleman that sits under his tail.'

As to the actual birth, 'though this was Joanna's first child, she knew more about the business than did her visitor, who seems to have been in a dither of importance over the novelty of the occasion. She was sometimes very daring and sometimes at such a loss that, in Joanna's words, "she could just pet me and kiss me and draw droll faces at me with the intent to help me through, and when she got me through she went skeer with triumph, crying out as she strutted up and down that we were the three wonders of the world.'"

There is no journalist at the author's elbow here, as R. L. Stevenson said (a long time ago) that there was at that of the genius ('genius' said

he too) who wrote the *Auld Licht Idylls*. When I read *Miss Julie Logan* I am half inclined to wish that Mr. Frohman, and Mammon, had never tempted Mr. Barrie to the playhouse, to wish that they had left him to develop himself and his collaborator, Mr. McConnachie, along the lines of the great novelists.

To read the Thrums books, after forty years, and wise maybe after the event of these years, is to gain the impression that the books are the growing-pains, the youthful indiscretions, the lucky strokes, if you will, of a genius which the gods had destined to employ as a great playwright's and not, as it might have been, as a great novelist's. There remains, further, a sense that the author never actually lived, fiercely to hate it or wholly to love, in the life he describes with so pretty a pathos, so tender a humour. A similar impression is not left by a similar reading of *Plain Tales from the Hills*.

The Thrums books were the impressions, hearsay most of them, of childhood, stimuli which influenced the mentality of genius to transmute them into the ideal if not into quite the real.

## CHAPTER VI

It will be remembered that the early Barrie in the beginning had said that he hated sentiment as a slave hates his master. Better had he said that he *feared* the emolliating emotion which, as the Scot, is said to be a bad master. With this wholesome fear before his eyes he 'backed the fashious beast' and had it eating out of his hand.

The Hippocrene from which he and his Pegasus drank was not treacle, though there are folk who, denying me, look on Thrums with doubt and suspicion. The transcripts from life in and about Kirriemuir are idealised. That is true enough. But they were written far from Kirrie. A man looks back and remarks, if he is of the more decently minded, only what is good. Barrie saw the far peaks touched with rose. He, in a distant land, felt the inspiration to write of a small village of the usual contemporary Lowland Scots type where drunkenness and loose living were the usual things. And where, for all the idyllic Auld Lights, few people kept God's law, though they might, and did weekly, stand up to pray in the Hie Kirk. Barrie wrote of it all, remembering only what was

good. He wrote of a type not common in the towns but found occasionally in some remote croft on the edges of a deer forest and fifteen miles from a public-house and the daffing in the market-place. But the type, though scarce, was a real enough one. I have known it, and for a little time lived with it, and sat in kitchens where the peats smoked on the hearth, and heard the master of the house read the Word in Gaelic to his family and to the collie dogs on the floor.

About 1875 an English man of letters wrote of the towns of Angus that they were peopled 'by whores and poachers.' This was in the first particular untrue, for though a kindly laxity was the rule among the lassies, there was no such thing as a professionalising of laxity. Barrie saw none of these things, and he created his characters with a touch that was inimitable, building them with the coloured bricks of a young man's fancy and breathing life into them as he built. Out of a poet-humanity he made them, if not human, at least alive for their little day. He overpainted, but the effect was a success. He created, and London and the English public saw that it was good. His sentiment was new and it was the first of its kind. It was not false although so mighty fair. Humour was in it, and a gentlemanly restraint.

The sentimentalist seems at times, as did his

Tommy, to laugh at himself and his emotional intensities. But the Barrie sentiment was as true as that of 'Swanee River,' of 'Home Sweet Home' as extolled by a Patti, or as that of 'Auld Lang Syne' sung at a Burns dinner in the Antipodes. Such sentiment is sound and worth while. It is a homely, home-loving and laughter-loving sentiment, it has the honey in it and the tears which can be heard, do you listen truly, when a nightingale sings in the sycamore. It expresses, lingering on little things, a contented, even a well-dined, exile's regret. It is as true a thing as the Christmas spirit called up by Mr. Dickens, who first evolved that convivial emotion.

Nobody other than J. M. Barrie could have invented the Barrie sentiment. It is made of light and shadow, the outlines of high Grampians and of the afterglow above Strathmore. It has drawn a mantle over the unseemly and put the guinea stamp of Mr. Burns on an amalgam of the tranquil and genuine emotions. One may look at it as an elderly man looks at a photograph of himself taken when he was young and handsome. And if he sighs and modestly fears that he was never so young and handsome as all that, it is nevertheless himself he sees for a certainty. So with the Barrie touch; it may exaggerate its subjects' good points, but it does not magnify them to the extent which is absurd and caricature.

It is therefore a true touch, and the more beautiful because it is artistically shown to be so. I hope, before I have done, to display the truth of it by a comparison of Kirrie sentiment with that of Drumtochty and elsewhere. For a man may be inimitable, but the fact does not say that he will not have imitators. That rather lovable old blackguard, Sir Anthony Gloster, Bart., made light of them. Said he:

They copied all they could follow, but they could not  
copy my mind,

And I left them sweating and stealing a year and a  
half behind.

Barrie would have been too kindly a fellow to speak thus aloud of his trade rivals, but he might have done so equally with Sir Anthony.

Competition did one thing for Barrie, it saved him from surfeiting his public with Tommy, with Thrums and with the Angus idiom. When the mode had been rendered ridiculous by a cloying imitation, its inventor saw his turn served and, dropping it like a hot coal, missed burning his fingers by an inch. A failure, a *Tommy*-rot would have spoiled the whole Thrums sequence. No failure was made.

With Thrums, overboard went the Scots tongue. It too had done its duty. It had, on the whole, been sparingly used and, on the whole, untranslatable words had been used in translatable contexts.

As example, take the word 'bilbie,' which means hiding-place or shelter. Wearyworld, the policeman in *The Little Minister*, says of his search for Babbie, the elusive Egyptian, that she is one who might 'find bilbie in queer places.' The context makes plain, I think? And, also in *The Little Minister*, Rob Dow, wishing to say that he puts more faith in his minister than in Babbie, a flighty hoyden, uses the portmanteau but intelligible-in-the-context word 'fliskmahoy' to describe the minx who wore the rowans.

Again, Rob says of coming rain that it will be a 'saft, cawdie on-ding.' Any Sassenach will recognise, as Mr. Barrie intended him to recognise, that 'cawdie' means 'gentle' or 'agreeable' ('couthie' if you like), and that 'on-ding' is evidently 'on-coming' or, more widely, 'shower.' Sir Walter Scott uses 'on-ding' ('jaw' would have been as good a word) as against rain, to signify a passing, if sharp, shower or storm, rather than settled wet.

'Silvandy' (the musical expression will be found in *Margaret Ogilvy*), so uninformative alone, becomes by Barrie courtesy (when he asked, 'Was that silvandy?') 'cannie'; was that 'cannie'? Was that 'wise'? he asks; Was that 'safe'? And from *Margaret Ogilvy* we also know that Barrie, a master of English, claims that he *thinks* in the Lallan. I doubt it, for the old Lallan is dead, yet (his words



prove him) there can be no doubt but that, did he ever drop into the ancient vernacular of Angus, he would go as easily among its old jewels of words as a trout flickers among the brown pebbles of bubbling burn water. And he 'keeps his feet' among the 'shalls' and 'wills,' keeps them as easily as did his Babbie, and thus proves himself, and out of his own mouth, an unworthy Scot, for, says he, 'never trust a Scotch man or woman who does not come to grief among them.'

To-day the Lowland Scots language is dead indeed as compared to what it was when Barrie was a boy, yes, and later than that by a decade or so. It was a graphic force for power of pathos and humour, and, in Thrums, it was declared by a master. It had a sense inexpressive in Cock-aigne. You could not get the meaning of 'Auld Lang Syne' into three, or into thirty, English words. A 'bonnie lass' means ten times more than a 'pretty girl.' But, except in the last two instances, possibly in one or two more than these (English now, as Barrie is, by adoption), the old idiom is dead. I do not believe that there goes a bairn in Kirrie or Brechin, or any other Angus where, who would know what you meant did you bid him, or her, 'flype your stockings' or 'tie your pints' instead of 'turn your stockings inside out, child,' or 'tie your bootlaces, you little sloven.' Can any comparison lie between the brisk effect-

iveness of the above, the vernacular so pithy, its substitute so unsingular?

Such 'short and simple annals' will be found in *Waverley*, in *Thürms*, in *Tam o' Shanter* and in the ruder rusticities of Burns—and elsewhere also. They are, as Lord Jeffrey said, not to be considered as a provincial dialect—the vehicle only of rustic vulgarity and rude local humour. Scots is the language of a whole country, long an independent kingdom, and still separate in laws, character and manners. It is by no means peculiar to the vulgar, but is (or was) the common speech of the whole nation in early life, and with many of its most exalted and accomplished individuals throughout their whole existence; and though it be true that, in later times, it has been in some measure laid aside by the more ambitious and aspiring of the present generation, it is still recollected even by them as the familiar language of their childhood, and of those who were the earliest objects of their love and veneration. It is connected in their imagination not only with that olden time which is uniformly conceived as more pure, lofty and simple than the present, but also with all the soft and bright colours of remembered childhood and domestic affection. All its phrases conjure up images of schoolday innocence and sports, and friendships which have no pattern in succeeding years.

*Pace* his lordship, the Lowland Scots, as Barrie knew it, as you perhaps did and I, is no more. 'The English have made the fine gentlemen of us.' I will mourn that old idiom with Stevenson, who, though he asked small help of it for his prose, used it as sword and buckler in much of his poetry. Optimistically he says:

It's possible—it's hardly mair—  
That some anc, ripin' after lear—  
Some auld professor or young heir,  
If still there's either—  
May find an' read me, an' be sair  
Perplexed, puir brither!

'What tongue does your auld bookie speak?'  
He'll speir; an' I, his mou' to steik:  
'No bein' fit to write in Greek  
I wrote in Lallan,  
Dear to my heart as the peat reek,  
Auld as Tantallon.

'Few spak it than, an' noo there's nane.  
My puir auld sangs lie a' their lane,  
Their sense, that aince was braw an' plain,  
Tint a'thegether,  
Like runes upon a standin' stane  
Among the heather.'

Yet the Lallan and Sentiment together (or indeed singly) are dogs that will 'yoke' on their master if he is not their very master. Let us see how the pair have treated two good Scotsmen at least, who, inspired by what their countryman

from Kirriemuir was doing in London with both tykes, would up and do likewise. These two are Mr. Crockett and Mr. 'Ian Maclaren' or Watson. I choose them because the pair were, after James Barrie, the principal cabbages among the Kailyarder school. The term 'Kailyard' came hot from Mr. Henley and his *New Review*; he used it in savage irony of those writers of the moment who, mixing their oatmeal with molasses, stirred it with the thieftal of Thrums. But the indiscriminating English public, who had so properly, so warmly, taken Barrie to its heart, at first lapped up his disciples with a like generous gusto, if one may judge by the sales of such books as *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* and *The Stickit Minister*.

Critics have cried out that Barrie himself followed George Macdonald, as Dr. Macdonald may have followed Sir Walter Scott. This is of course not so. Dr. Macdonald wrote in the Lowland Scots metaphor, it is true, and of the peasant class—he was himself son to a crofter of Glencoe—he even touched on 'faerie romances,' but there the resemblance between the countrymen ends.

Dr. Macdonald may be said to be an unfortunate fellow. He was born forty years too soon to enjoy the Kailyard boom. Had he written at a time when a majority of the London editors and reviewers were Scotsmen he could not have failed

to enjoy the popularity of those who carried on his torch in the 1880's. For he wrote fervently of the simple emotions of the simple life, tempering, as he did so, piety with pawkiness. And he had atmosphere and a streak of sincere poetry. Indeed, he might, had he developed his Muse and found her sufficiently vital, have won some fame from her. He was popular in Scotland, but, if not exactly a failure south of Tweed, he received, as an obituary said of him, neither praise nor pudding of the English public. Yet one can, with a little perseverance, read his books still and be the better of them. But you will find in them no trace of Puck or of Peter or of Pan.

Macdonald was a link between Sir Walter Scott, he who helped himself heartily to the aid of the Lowland Scots language, and James Barrie, who did likewise. Dr. Macdonald was not one of the Kailyard; otherwise he might have been an ornament thereto, for he could write with sympathy and he has shown no sign of surfeiting an admirer with honey.

Nor was Andrew Lang of the Kailyard, nor, of course, Stevenson. Nor is the most efficient artist of all, in the idiom, Mrs. Violet Jacob, a Kailyarder. I have said that Barrie, Crockett and Maclaren were the principal yarders. But it was the two last who choked the public with cream while Barrie, as he would have said, skipping

'atower the dyke and awa,' left the corpse of his once friend to its murderers. For a reader of this book who will surely (if indeed he has ever heard of it) have forgotten the Kailyard and the sentiment of the Kailyard, I will, by quotation, prove the same at its best and worst. I will go first to that best seller, *The Stickit Minister* of Mr. S. R. Crockett, who must have made a fortune out of it and similar romantic studies of the North. And if there breathes a man with soul so dead as to require a translation of Mr. Crockett's title, I would tell him that a Stickit Minister is a licentiate or student of divinity who, having taken no degree, has consequently no flock, living or parocheme. Mr. Crockett tells us how Robert Fraser became Stickit. Robert, he suffers from phthisis, had given up his career at College in order to give his younger brother a chance of University education:

“The story went over the country that I had failed in my examinations, and I never said that I had not. But there were some that knew better who might have contradicted the report if they had liked. I settled down to the farm, and I put Harry through the college, sending all but a bare living to him in Edinburgh. I worked the work of the farm, rain and shine, ever since, and have been for these six years the ‘stickit minister’ that all the world kens the day. Whiles Harry did not

think that he got enough. He was always writing for mair, and not so very pleased when he did not get it. He was aye different to me, ye ken, Saunders, and he canna be judged by the same standard as you and me."

"I ken," said Saunders M'Quhirr, a spark of light lying in the quiet of his eyes.

"Well," continued Robert Fraser, lightened by Saunders' apparent agreement, "the time came when he was clear from the college, and wanted a practice. He had been ill-advised that he had not got his share of the farm, and he wanted it sold to share and share alike. Now I kenned, and you ken, Saunders, that it's no' worth much in one share let alone two. So I got the place quietly bonded, and bought him old Dr. Aitken's practice in Cairn Edward with the money.

"I have tried to do my best for the lad, for it was laid on me to be my brother's keeper. He doesna come here much," continued Robert, "but I think he's not so ill against me as he was. Saunders, he waved his hand to me when he was gaun by the day!"

"That was kind o' him," said Saunders M'Quhirr.

"Ay, was it no'," said the Stickit Minister, eagerly, with a soft look in his eyes as he glanced up at his brother's portrait in cap and gown,

which hung over the china dogs on the mantelpiece.

“I got my notice this morning that the bond is to be called up in November,” said Robert. “So I’ll be obliged to flit.”

‘Saunders M’Quhirr started to his feet in a moment. “Never,” he said, with the spark of fire alive now in his eyes, “never as lang as there’s a beast on Drumquhat, or a poun’ in Cairn Edward Bank,” bringing down his clenched fist upon the Milton on the table.

“No, Saunders, no,” said the Stickit Minister, very gently; “I thank you kindly, but *I’ll be flitted before that!*”

And in the same book Mr. Crockett tells of Miss Janet Balchrystie, a local poetess of New Dalry. She publishes her verses at her own charges. The book gets into the hands of a reviewer ‘in the great city’; he is ‘the Junior Reporter’ and he slates *The Heather Lintie* in two smart columns of ‘New Journalism.’ The review commences: ‘This is a book which may be a genuine source of pride to every native of the ancient province of Galloway.’ A copy of the review, in due course, reaches the authoress, who is, as was the Minister above, also dying of a decline:

“Leave it on the step, and thank you kindly, Rob,” said a weak voice within, and Rob, anxious about his horse and his bed, did so without



another word. In a moment or two Janet crawled to the door, listened to make sure that Rob was really gone, opened the door, and protruded a hand wasted to the hard flat bone—an arm that ought for her years to have been of full flesh and noble curves.

‘When Janet got back to bed it was too dark to see anything except the big printing at the top of the paper.

“‘Two columns of it!’” said Janet, with great thankfulness in her heart, lifting up her soul to God who had given her the power to sing. She strained her prematurely old and weary eyes to make out the sense. “A genuine source of pride to every native of the ancient province,” she read.

“‘The Lord be praised!’” said Janet, in a rapture of devout thankfulness, “though I never really doubted it,” she added, as though asking pardon for a moment’s distrust. “But I tried to write these poems to the glory of God and not to my own praise, and He will accept them and keep me humble under the praise of men as well as under their neglect.”

‘So, clutching the precious paper close to her breast, and letting tears of thankfulness fall on the article which, had they fallen on the head of the Junior Reporter, would have burnt like fire, she patiently awaited the coming dawn.

“I can wait till morning now to read the rest,” she said.

‘So hour after hour, with eyes wide, staring hard at the grey window squares, she waited the dawn from the east. About half-past two there was a stirring and a moaning among the pines, and the roar of the sudden gust came with the breaking day through the dark arches. In the whirlwind there came a strange expectancy and tremor into the heart of the poetess, and she pressed the wet sheet of crumpled paper closer to her bosom, and turned to face the light. Through the spaces of the Long Wood of Barbrax there came a shining visitor, the Angel of the Presence, he who comes but once and stands a moment with a beckoning finger. Him she followed up through the wood.

‘They found Janet on the morning of the second day after, with a look so glad on her face and so natural an expectation in the unclosed eye, that Rob Affleck spoke to her and expected an answer. *The Night Hawk* was clasped to her breast with a hand that they could not loosen. It went to the grave with her body. The ink had run a little here and there, where the tears had fallen the thickest.

‘God is more merciful than man.’

Mr. Ian Maclaren’s idylls of Drumtochty, under the title *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*, carry on the

good work. Indeed, we meet at Drumtochty, as at the Minister's, with the same community as that of Thrums, everybody living for somebody else and in many cases dying for the sake of another. The bachelors remain faithful for forty years, and the women are as sweet and pure as any you ever knew. Even Flora Campbell, who runs away to London, is fundamentally all right. Her father has denounced Flora to the Kirk Session:

‘It was Burnbrae that first found a voice, and showed that night the fine delicacy of heart that may be hidden behind a plain exterior.

“Moderator, this is a terrible calamity that hes befaen oor brither, and a’m feelin’ as if a’ h’d lost a bairn o’ my anc, for a sweeter lassie didna cross oor kirk door. Nane o’ us want tae know what hes happened or where she hes gane, and no word o’ this wull cross oor lips. Her faither’s dune mair than cud be expeckit o’ mortal man, and noo we have oor duty. It’s no’ the way o’ this Session tae cut aff ony member o’ the flock at a stroke, and we’ll no begin with Flora Campbell. A’ move, Moderator, that her case be left tae her faither and yersel, and oor neebur may depend on it that Flora’s name and his ain will be mentioned in oor prayers, ilka mornin’ an’ nicht till the gude Shepherd o’ the sheep brings her hame.”

‘Burnbrae paused, and then, with tears in his

voice—men do not weep in Drumtochty—“With the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption.”

‘The minister took the old man’s arm and led him into the manse, and set him in the big chair by the study fire. “Thank God, Lachlan, we are friends now; tell me about it as if I were your son and Flora’s brother.”

‘The father took a letter out of an inner pocket with a trembling hand, and this is what Carmichael read by the light of the lamp:—

“DEAR FATHER,—When this reaches you I will be in London, and not worthy to cross your door. Do not always be angry with me, and try to forgive me, for you will not be troubled any more by my dancing or dressing. Do not think that I will be blaming you, for you have been a good father to me and said what you would be considering right, but it is not easy for a man to understand a girl. Oh, if I had had my mother, then she would have understood me, and I would not have crossed you. Forget poor Flora’s foolishness, but you will not forget her, and maybe you will still pray for me. Take care of the geraniums for my sake, and give milk to the lamb that you called after me. I will never see you again, in this world or the next, nor my mother . . . (here the letter was much blotted). When I think that there will be no one to look after you,

and have the fire burning for you on winter nights, I will be rising to come back. But it is too late. Oh, the disgrace I will be bringing on you in the glen.—Your unworthy daughter, FLORA CAMPBELL.”

“This is a fiery trial, Lachlan, and I cannot even imagine what you are suffering. But do not despair, for that is not the letter of a bad girl. Perhaps she was impatient, and has been led astray. But Flora is good at heart, and you must not think she is gone for ever.”

‘Lachlan groaned, the first moan he had made, and then he tottered to his feet.’

The Minister was in the right of it, for, after a week or so, and long before the pet lamb was mutton-grown, Flora, repentant, comes back to the glen and to a universal forgiveness. But Mr. Maclaren does not tell us why Flora went to London in the first instance; she does not seem to have been ‘led astray’ in the usual manner.

Drumtochty enjoys a spate of similar happenings. Yet the books that I have quoted from sold as hot cakes; their authors’ names, for the moment, were in all men’s mouths. It is a public who demanded such goods that must bear the grue of what was ridiculous, false and tawdry in these fashionable studies of humble Scottish life. The authors, who had their livings to earn, gave what was asked for with, for all I know, their

tongues in their cheeks. Their readers, blinded by a sort of literary mob-madness, seemed unable to discriminate between a false sentiment and a true one. They acclaimed the Kailyarders as equal and bought the books of all in equal abundance. Therefore I hold neither Mr. Crockett nor Mr. Maclaren up to any ridicule. Yet it seems to-day a remarkable fact that few could detect the true candy of a master confectioner displayed in the Thrums window when compared with the saccharine of Drumtochty and Galloway.

Here are the same humble folk as above, the same faithful piety, the same kindly affection one to another, as exhibited in 'The Last Night' by the greater hand who wrote *A Window in Thrums*:

'By and by Leeby went ben for the Bible, and put it into Hendry's hands. He slowly turned over the leaves to his favourite chapter, the fourteenth of John's Gospel. Always, on eventful occasions, did Hendry turn to the fourteenth of John.

"Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.

"In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."

'As Hendry raised his voice to read there was a great stillness in the kitchen. I do not know that I have been able to show in the most imperfect

way what kind of man Hendry was. He was dense in many things, and the cleverness that was Jess's was denied to him. He had less book-learning than most of those with whom he passed his days, and he had little skill in talk. I have not known a man more easily taken in by persons whose speech had two faces. But a more simple, modest, upright man there never was in Thrums, and I shall always revere his memory.

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

‘The voice may have been monotonous. I have always thought that Hendry’s reading of the Bible was the most solemn and impressive I have ever heard. He exulted in the fourteenth of John, pouring it forth like one whom it intoxicated while he read. He emphasised every other word; it was so real and grand to him.

‘We went upon our knees while Hendry prayed, all but Jess, who could not. Jamie buried his face in her lap. The words Hendry said were those he used every night. Some, perhaps, would have smiled at his prayer to God that we be not puffed up with riches nor with the things of this world. His head shook with emotion while he prayed, and he brought us very near to the throne of grace. “Do thou, O our God,” he said, in conclusion, “spread Thy guiding hand over him whom in

Thy great mercy Thou hast brought to us again, and do Thou guard him through the perils which come unto those that go down to the sea in ships. Let not our hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid, for this is not our abiding home, and may we all meet in Thy house, where there are many mansions, and where there will be no last night. Amen."

'It was a silent kitchen after that, though the lamp burned long in Jess's window. By its meagre light you may take a final glance at the little family; you will never see them together again.'

Every rose has, however, its thorn. A sweetness more than a little is, as we know, by much too much. The challenge of Thrums and Drumtochty was taken up by Barbie. Barbie, as these are, is a Lowland kirkton. But how different are its inhabitants, as pictured by Mr. George Douglas in *The House with the Green Shutters*, to the good folk in and about Kirriemuir! The people of Barbie waste neither time nor money on acts of kindness; they are mean, bitter-hearted, jealous and merciless as the upper millstone. John Gourlay, farmer, builder and contractor, the hero, is as cold and disagreeable a character as may be found in literature. He is shrewd and vain and pitiable all at once. His decline and fall is as tremendous as a Greek tragedy. All things fail him in the end. His student son drinks himself



into murder and suicide. The story tells of the overthrow and downfall of *The House with the Green Shutters* at the hands of a scheming little ferret of a fellow, James Wilson by name. In Wilson's appearance is an air of 'dirty and pre-tentious well-to-do-ness.' He is a son of Barbie who left it young for Aberdeen. He has returned, running the trail of a rumour which tells of coal in the Barbie vale, coal about to be exploited, when, do the pits come, property in and about Barbie will rise like a 'puddock stool at dark, serr.' Thus Gourlay meets the returned native:

"It's a fine morning, Mr. Gourlay," simpered the stranger. His air was that of a forward tenant who thinks it a great thing to pass remarks on the weather with his laird.

'Gourlay cast a look at the dropping heavens.

"Is that *your* opinion?" said he, "I fail to see't mysel."

'It was not in Gourlay to see the beauty of that gray, wet dawn. A fine morning to him was one that burnt the back of the neck.

'The stranger laughed: a little deprecating giggle. "I meant it was fine weather for the fields," he explained. He had meant nothing of the kind, of course; he had merely been talking at random in his wish to be civil to that important man, John Gourlay.

"Imphm," he pondered, looking round on the

weather with a wise air; "imphm; it's fine weather for the fields."

"Are *you* a farmer, then?" Gourlay nipped him, with his eye on the white waistcoat.

"Oh—oh, Mr. Gourlay! A farmer, no. Hi—hi! I'm not a farmer. I dare say, now, you have no mind of *me*?"

"No," said Gourlay, regarding him very gravely and steadily with his dark eyes. "I cannot say, sir, that I have the pleasure of remembering *you*."

"Man, I'm a son of auld John Wilson of Brigabee."

"Oh, auld Wilson, the mole-catcher!" said contemptuous Gourlay. "What's this they christened him now? 'Toddling Johnnie' was it noat?"

'Wilson coloured. But he sniggered to gloss over the awkwardness of the remark. A coward always sniggers when insulted, pretending that the insult is only a joke of his opponent and therefore to be laughed aside. So he escapes the quarrel which he fears a show of displeasure might provoke.

'But though Wilson was not a hardy man, it was not timidity only that caused his tame submission to Gourlay.

'It rarely entered Wilson's brain (though he was cleverer than most) that the world could find anything to scoff at in such a fine fellow as James Wilson. A less ironic brute than Gourlay would never have pierced the thickness of his hide. It

was because Gourlay succeeded in piercing it that morning that Wilson hated him for ever—with a hate the more bitter because he was rebuffed so seldom.

“Is business brisk?” he asked, irrepressible.

‘Business! Heavens, did ye hear him talking? What did Toddling Johnny’s son know about business? What was the world coming to? To hear him setting up his face there, and asking the best merchant in the town whether business was brisk! It was high time to put him in his place, the conceited upstart, shoving himself forward like an equal!

‘For it was the assumption of equality implied by Wilson’s manner that offended Gourlay—as if mole-catcher’s son and monopolist were discussing on equal terms, matters of interest to them both.

“Business!” he said gravely. “Well, I’m not well acquainted with your line, but I believe mole-traps are cheap—if ye have any idea of taking up the oald trade.”

‘Wilson’s eyes flickered over him, hurt and dubious. His mouth opened—then shut—then he decided to speak after all. “Oh, I was thinking Barbie would be very quiet,” said he, “compared wi’ places where they have the railway. I was thinking it would need stirring up a bit.”

“Oh, ye was thinking that, was ye?” birred Gourlay, with a stupid man’s repetition of his

jibe. "Well, I believe there's a grand opening in the moleskin line, so *there's* a chance for ye. My quarrymen wear out their breeks in no time."

'Wilson's face, which had swelled with red shame, went a dead white. "Good morning!" he said, and started rapidly away with a vicious dig of his stick upon the wet road.

"Goo-ood mor-r-ning, serr!" Gourlay birred after him; "goo-ood mor-r-ning, serr!" He felt he had been bright this morning. He had put the branks on Wilson!'

In Mr. Douglas's *Barbie* the reader meets a type of Scot as exaggeratedly untrue to life as are the characters of Thrums. I may mention an echo of *Barbie*. It may be heard in *Kinraddie*, in Mr. Gibbon's masterly and magnificent *Sunset Song*, the scene of which is laid not so far from Kirriemuir. Here, as in *Barbie*, the pendulum swings far from the Thrums ideal, and the *Kinraddie* minister, who kisses the lassies of his cure 'like a dog lapping porridge,' does not at all resemble Gavin Dishart. But Mr. Gibbon's novel is greatly popular for all that. As in *Barbie*, as in *Thrums*, the characters of *Kinraddie* are exaggerated. The average Scot of the lower class is not an avaricious knave, a licentious sot, nor a psalm-singing simpleton. Yet, in the hands of a master, he can be made any one of the three and, with or without a halo, he sells, it would seem, invariably well.

## CHAPTER VII

THE Barrie Period may be said to have started in 1891 when the play, J. M. Barrie's first London stage venture, *Ibsen's Ghost* or *Toole up to Date*, was produced at Toole's Theatre. It was a one-act piece and its performance was covered by a short half-hour. It was a burlesque of *Hedda Gabler* and of Ibsen generally. It was played, on a cold, wet afternoon in May, to a packed house assembled to enjoy mixed bills. *Ibsen's Ghost*, the medium for what its critics called 'a good laugh,' was a triumphant success. I read that during the first performance a member of the audience was removed from the pit in hysterics. In truth, it was a much funnier playlet than most of the burlesques then in vogue.

Shakespeare and Grand Opera were favourite subjects for caricature. But so were the Christie Minstrels, and so was the young lady, at the moment, being shot out of a cannon at the Aquarium. To be a success, burlesque depended on its puns, which were excruciating efforts such as:

Oh, what a noise! Oh, what a frightful shindy!  
Those Ethiopians 'neath theopian windy!

Or, deadlier still, when Miss Farren at Drury Lane Pantomime, masquerading as the young lady at the Aquarium (her name I forget, but I think it was Zazel or something similar), inserted her pretty person into the dummy gun: 'Are you in?' enquired her dancing partner—Mr. Fred Leslie, I suppose. 'Are you far in? Are you Nellie (nearly) Far in?' Heavens, how one laughed!

Ibsen, to-day forgotten or nearly so, was, in the late 1880's and early 1890's, whether delighting or offending the highbrows of the hour—the 'intellectuals' they were called, enjoying a furore. The Raven, the foul bird of Norway, was being proclaimed as great a bird as Avon's Swan. To enjoy *Ibsen's Ghost* to-day one would have to have been an Ibsenite of the 'eighties versed in suicide and in matrimonial and religious tangles. Yet here is a scrap of *The Ghost's* dialogue which, a little, declares its delightful fooling:

TESMAN. Hedda, dear——

THEA (*weirdly*). I am not Hedda. I am Thea.

TESMAN. I beg your pardon. Is there a 'k' in 'Christianity'?

THEA (*very weirdly*). There—is—*nothing*—in Christianity.

TESMAN. Fancy that!

The play, a three-act farce, which was to found, on the boards, the Barrie fortunes, was *Walker, London*. Its basis is an incident in *My Lady*

*Nicotine*; its chief character, one Jaspar Phipps, is a London hairdresser who is engaged to a Miss Sarah Rigg. He runs away from her on their wedding morning and takes the honeymoon cash along with him. He explains himself to Sarah in the following letter (too long for a stage letter perhaps):

‘MY DEAREST SARAH,

You will be surprised at my not turning up to marry you, and I feel I owe you an apology. First, my love, it is a startler to a man to wake up on his marriage morning and remember that in an hour he will be tied up for life. Second, through shaving so many gents, I feel that I want to have a burst as one myself. Sarah, it can only be done with the honeymoon money. Third, my sweet, I know a swell I’m like in appearance, and I am going to pass for him, but he is a bachelor, so it wouldn’t be proper to take you with me. Fourth, it would be more difficult for you than for me to look a swell. Fifth, there is not enough money for two at any rate. Everything considered, dear Sarah, I have decided to have the honeymoon before the marriage, and to have it by myself. Then, my girl, when my week’s leave is up, I will come back and marry you. Fear not, I am staunch. And don’t follow me.

Your affectionate JASPER.

P.S. I love you! I love you! I love you!’

Jasper goes to Maidenhead and there sees a boatman rescue a fainting damsel, Miss Bell Golightly, who has fallen into the river. He bribes the man to tell Bell, she regaining consciousness, that he, Jasper, is her preserver. Jasper announces himself to be an African big-game hunter, Colonel Neil. He is invited on board the house-boat where Miss Golightly, her mother, brothers and some friends are spending a holiday. There Jasper is lionised by the party assembled. Among the latter is Miss Nannie O'Brien, with whom the hairdresser flirts atrociously. In the end, and to his relief, his rightful Sarah tracks him to the house-boat and rescues him from a position which has become embarrassing. Sarah effects Jasper's escape without his new friends being aware of her arrival or departure. As Jasper pushes off in a punt on his way to the station, to London Town and to matrimony, the house-boat party remember that they have not got the charming and heroic Colonel's telegraphic address. They call loudly for the same. No answer comes other than the lap, lap of the river. Then, from afar, comes the voice of the famous explorer: 'Walker, London.' And so falls an admirable Curtain.

The author did not respond to a call for him by an enthusiastic audience. But Mr. Toole got a



laugh by apologising for Mr. Barrie thus: 'He is too shy to be seen, he is not in the theatre and he does *not* smoke.' The last got the laugh partly because Barrie was well known as the author of *My Lady Nicotine*, but mostly in that Toole alluded to Wilde's sensational appearance before the curtain of the St. James's Theatre where, on the previous night, his *Lady Windermere's Fan* had been produced. Mr. Wilde, a fat man in evening-dress, wearing a fur-lined overcoat, had strolled into view smoking a cigarette and, the applause subsiding, had continued to smoke while he assured the audience that he was so glad the acting had not quite spoilt his little play and further that, in fact, 'I have spent an enjoyable evening.'

*Walker, London* ran for a year. And Mr. Barrie's Jasper Phipps and his Sarah inevitably remind me of Mr. 'Anstey's' bachelor barber, Leander Tweddle and his Matilda, both to be met in *The Tinted Venus*.

The next venture was a deplorable one. In collaboration with Conan Doyle, in imitation, one supposes, of the great 'Savoyards,' our dramatist, so I may now call him, wrote the book of the comic opera *Jane Annie* or *The Good Conduct Prize*. The music was by Ernest Ford. The lyrics, to a public accustomed to the polished song and dance of Gilbert, were impossibly bad.

Here is an example, and I hope that it is the work of Dr. Conan Doyle:

Proctors have no acumen  
And no respect for women.

No one, I think, stayed away from that other new play, *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, in order to see *Jane Annie*, who pined away in consequence and died. She was succeeded almost at once by Professor Goodwillie of Thrums in *The Professor's Love Story*. In spite of the improbabilities of the story, such as a young Professor falling in love with his typist and being so ignorant of what ailed him that he must needs consult his doctor, the comedy was greatly successful. But it required some swallowing, and only the supreme art of Mr. Barrie saved it from what the euphonical *Times* young man called 'wearing the guise of puerility.'

The simple Goodwillie's (Goodwillie was played by E. S. Willard, an actor who might have been a great one but was not) simplicity gives some cause for wonder, for he enquires, his case being diagnosed, 'But who is the lady?' A line which nevertheless failed not, on nearly a thousand occasions, to bring the house down. The Professor in his simple Scottish setting, all harvest fields, far-blue hills and bowers of honeysuckle, continued to tell his story for nearly two years and made way at length for Gavin Dishart and

his Babbie in the dramatised version of *The Little Minister* which came to the Haymarket in November 1897.

The book had been popular, as we know; the play was brilliantly successful. Of the novel, Mr. W. Robertson Nicoll, the most distinguished of its critics, had said: 'It is wildly impossible, but is it not a rich book with many pretty little things in it?' He added, however: 'Barrie will succeed, and that soon.' There were no such half-measures about the reception of the play. It was said, moreover, to mark a new era in dramatic authorship, to mark the arrival of the novelist-playwright, then (with the possible exception of Oscar Wilde, who had written the fantasy *The Picture of Dorian Gray*) unknown. Soon there were to be many such ambidextrous writers—Galsworthy, Bennett and many another.

*The Little Minister's* production required courage, since the author's stage sense told him loudly that the story of the novel, as in the book, must be drastically altered. Also the Scots accent must be savagely Anglicised—but the actors and actresses would see to that anyhow. And so they did. Those who saw the play will remember how lovely Winifred Emery, rowan-crowned and barefooted (as was Trilby next door), danced among the fallen leaves of Caddam and sometimes used the vernacular and then clean forgot it, while her

little Minister, Mr. Cyril Maude (the poltroon), never attempted it. But Mr. Maude played Gavin Dishart so delightfully that one forgot how improbable a figure he was.

The author had had to cut and cut and cut; he had had to make Babbie daughter to the impossible Rintoul and not the betrothed of that ignoble man. Barrie succeeded in a mastery of dialogue, situations and curtains. The whole he sprinkled with the comic and canny Thrums characters who had been so successfully exploited in *The Professor's Love Story*.

Next to Victoria's Jubilee, the new Barrie play at the Haymarket was the event of 1897. Throughout the play I regret, as I regretted it throughout the novel, that the author should have called his heroine, so weakly, Babbie and not the true Scots Barbie. It is my only regret.

By this time Barrie was arrived. He was the great playwright, said many (employing the adjective 'immortal' consideredly and considerably), of the century, of several centuries in fact, those past and, surely, those to come. And what was the secret? Why, one said the one thing and another the other. Mr. Max Beerbohm, declaring that Barrie was the best that had happened to the English stage for long years, stated that Barrie's success was due to the fact that he, a man, yet remained a child able to express through

an artistic medium the immortal childishness that was in him. But Barrie's triumph was perhaps due to more than Mr. Beerbohm said. Barrie knew exactly what he wanted to say in words and in action which speaks louder than words. He had the gift of charm and the quality of exploiting the gift by studious and canny attention until the charm seemed as spontaneous and natural as an April day of light and shadow, sunshine and shower. He would elaborate a fancy, no doubt with labour, and it would appear as though he chased it as joyfully as a child chases a butterfly. But when caught, he never seemed to bottle the insect. It was as though he held the bright thing in his hand a moment and let it fly off his fingertips again. Rarely does he set problems. Action and character serve the turn of his imagination. He creates the maximum of impression by the minimum of words.

I would quote two brief instances. First, I will remember the final Curtain of *Walker, London*, already alluded to. What could better describe the bogus Colonel, the humbug Jasper, gone, for good and all, out of the ken of a, possibly, disillusioned house-boatful, than those two impudent words which drift back across Thames water? They are the position in a nutshell.

Once more, here is the Honourable Ernest Woolley in half a dozen words. The author, in

the synopsis for Act I of *The Admirable Crichton*, has described Ernest at some length, in, say, six hundred economical words. He finishes the picture thus: 'His selfishness is his most endearing quality. If he has his way he will spend his life like a cat in pushing his betters out of the soft places, and until he is old he will be fondled in the process.' In Act II this description fits nicely into six words. Ernest is writing a letter to be sent afloat in a bottle that it may announce the plight of the shipwrecked on the island:

ERNEST. By night the cries of wild cats and the hissing of snakes terrify us extremely—(*This does not satisfy him so well and he makes a correction*)—terrify the ladies extremely. Against these we have no weapon except one cutlass and a hatchet. A bucket washed ashore is at present our only comfortable seat—

LADY MARY. And Ernest is sitting on it.

Here is surely the genius of briefness and simplicity.

Barrie never feared to face what might have been the dangerously ridiculous, and, sometimes at least, he got triumphantly and naturally away with it. It must have required a little confidence to put your serious name and intention to such an extravagant extravaganza as *Peter Pan* wherein children fly in and out of windows, as in harlequinade, and where crocodiles swallow alarum-

clocks. *Peter* must also have been an expensive proposition to stage. Indeed, we know that Barrie expected nothing of this 'dream child' of his beyond that Frohman should produce it and, to compensate for the certain loss to be incurred, the author insisted that 'C. F.' should accept the gift of *Alice Sit-by-the-Fire*. *Alice*, charming as she was in the person of Miss Ellen Terry, was no great money-spinner, whereas *Peter's* success was a Golconda, and is and will be, one supposes, for ever. But *Peter*, while absurd, was wonderful and wistful and poignant. *Alice* was an effusion which Barrie's versatile skill could scarcely save from being a mere tangle of emotional and comic issues.

To return to *Peter* for whom his creator had feared. Mr. Frohman never for a moment doubted the boy. So entranced was he after a first reading that he would stop acquaintances in the street and tell them, to appropriate gesture, of the fairy gold-mine that he had acquired. But, as I said, *Peter* required the courage of a man's opinion.

To mention one more dangerous situation faced and saved, if not triumphantly at least passably well, one must go to *Mary Rose*. Of *Mary Rose*, and of *Peter* too, I shall have occasion to speak later on; here I will only say of the former that this lovely and spiritual conception was staged in the ugly and uneasy period that followed immediately upon the War. It was supposed to

possess some meaning other than the obvious. *Mary Rose* was discussed at dinner-parties, it was controversial. It was said to be a powerful defence of Spiritualism. But indeed it was but the old theme of the young person that the fairies have stolen away. It is as old a theme as True Thomas, it is as young as bonnie Kilmeny. It exists in one form or another throughout folklore. It brought, as Sir James Barrie so beautifully told it, joy and peace and a tear or two to thousands, weary of the War and the War's aftermath, during the years of its run. It has as beautiful a love-scene as has been staged since little Juliet first leaned over her balcony. It is a love-scene, that one between young husband and young wife on the little dangerous Hebridean Island in Act II, the island that 'liked to be visited,' with a whimsy in its playing and a portent.

There is something of the same magic in the wood without Lob's window where Dearth, in *Dear Brutus*, discusses sportively with his daughter-of-a-dream, the delicious Margaret.

But I am wide of my point, which was the element of the ridiculous which the author faced in the final Act and carried off without failure. It will be remembered that Mary Rose, the young mother, prior to her second visit to *The Shi*, has said that she looked forward to a day when her





**J. M. BARRIE WRITING "MARY ROSE"**

**A photograph taken at Eilean Shona, August 1920.  
Note that the dramatist is writing with his left hand**



baby, Harry, will be 'a man and takes me on his knee instead of my putting him on mine. Oh, gorgeous!' She comes back, as did Kilmeny, to find her parents old, her husband middle-aged and her little boy, grown to manhood, lost sight of in Australia. Mary Rose goes from the material once more—this time for ever, since she is dead. Her ghost comes to haunt her old home, and there, eventually, comes her son, an Australian soldier of the War, to see his birthplace. The caretaker shows him round and, leaving him alone in the house, to the son comes his mother—his mother's psychic self. Only a genius—that much ill-used word, but I can find no better—could make the scene between mother and son unbathetic. The little spectre sits on the soldier's knee. Says Harry, 'I wonder if there was ever a man with a ghost on his knee before?' Only Barrie could have put her there and not made a fool of her, of himself and of his audience. Only Sir James Barrie could have closed (and saved) the situation, the Act and the play thus:

HARRY. And this brings us no nearer what's to be done with you. I would willingly stay here though I have my clearing in Australy, but you're just a ghost. They say there are ways of laying ghosts, but I am so ignorant.

MARY ROSE (*imploringly*). Tell me.

HARRY. All I know about them for certain is that they are unhappy because they can't find something,

and then once they've got the thing they want, they go away happy and never come back.

MARY ROSE. Oh, nice!

HARRY. The one thing clear to me is that you have got that thing at last, but you are too dog-tired to know or care. What you need now is to get back to the place you say is lovely, lovely.

MARY ROSE. Yes, yes.

HARRY. It sounds as if it might be Heaven, or near thereby. (*She wants him to find out for her.*) Queer, you that know so much can tell nothing, and them that know nothing can tell so much. If there was any way of getting you to that glory place!

MARY ROSE. Tell me.

HARRY (*desperate*). He would surely send for you, if He wanted you.

MARY ROSE (*crushed*). Yes.

HARRY. It's like as if He had forgotten you.

MARY ROSE. Yes.

HARRY. It's as if nobody wanted you, either there or here.

MARY ROSE. Yes. (*She rises.*) Bad man.

HARRY. It's easy to call me names, but the thing fair beats me. There is nothing I wouldn't do for you, but a mere man is so helpless. How should the likes of me know what to do with a ghost that has lost her way on earth? I wonder if what it means is that you broke some law, just to come back for the sake of—of that Harry? If it was that, it's surely time He overlooked it.

MARY ROSE. Yes.

(*He looks at the open window.*)

HARRY. What a night of stars! Good old glitterers, I dare say they are in the know, but I am thinking you are too small a thing to get a helping hand from them.

MARY ROSE. Yes.

*(The call is again heard, but there is in it now no unholy sound. It is a celestial music that is calling for Mary Rose, first in whispers and soon so loudly that, for one who can hear, it is the only sound in the world. Mary Rose, Mary Rose. As it wraps her round, the weary little ghost knows that her long day is done. Her face is shining. The smallest star shoots down for her, and with her arms stretched forth to it trustingly she walks out through the window into the empyrean. The music passes with her. HARRY hears nothing, but he knows that somehow a prayer has been answered.)*

The curtain went down to a dead silence till the first bars of 'God Save the King' brought a cheering house to its feet. Barrie had been a famous and highly successful man for twenty years and more. That evening seemed to set the seal on a scroll of noble and lucrative achievement. His friend William Robertson Nicoll said of his success: 'But he is one of the men, more numerous, I fancy, than we think, who are in every way improved by success—softened, humbled and redeemed from cynicism.'

It would be over-long and over-tedious did I who am no critic of the drama attempt a criticism of the numerous Barrie plays and playlets which delighted (nearly all of them delighted) London and the public during the final decade of the last century and the first quarter of the present one. Roughly speaking, throughout those years, from

the Kailyard grew the hardy annual of the hot-house, of that edifice of artifice which we call the Theatre.

Of the pre-War plays, not to name the ever-green fantasy of *Peter Pan*, the author's greatest fame may be named with those high successes, *The Admirable Crichton*, *Quality Street* and *Little Mary*. *Crichton* is a splendid adventure in social topsy-turvy. All know the story of how the Earl of Loam's yacht, containing himself, his daughters (the Ladies Lasenby), some friends (among them, happily, a Church of England parson) and two of his domestic staff, become wrecked on a desert island in the tropics, and how the lines of Mr. Burns about the guinea stamp become true, since *Crichton*, the butler, by sheer force of character established himself the leader and king of the little community. In this capacity *Crichton* becomes, or is about to become, engaged to Lady Mary Lasenby, who, when at home, was engaged to a brainless young idiot, Lord Brocklehurst. *Crichton*, at the apogee of the play, is gripped with the idea that once, in some previous existence, he was a king indeed and Polly Lasenby a slave in his household to whom he would play the Cophetua. He declaims the opening quatrain of Henley's lines to 'W. A.':

Or ever the knightly years were gone  
With the old world to the grave,

I was a king in Babylon  
And you were a Christian slave.

And, oblivious of the fact that when kings reigned in Babylon no Babe was to be born in Bethlehem for a long three thousand years, Lady Mary (insularly 'Polly'), as one fascinated, replies: 'It may have been.'

CRICHTON. I am lord over all. They are but hewers of wood and drawers of water for me. These shores are mine. Why should I hesitate; I have no longer any doubt. I do believe I am doing the right thing. Dear Polly, I have grown to love you; are you afraid to mate with me? (*She rocks her arms; no words will come from her.*)

I was a king in Babylon  
'And you were a Christian slave.

LADY MARY (*bewitched*). You are the most wonderful man I have ever known, and I am not afraid.  
(*He takes her to him with mastership.*)

And, anon, a cannon booms from the blue offing, the report rolls across the tides of romance and shatters them. It is the gun of a warship sent to search for the missing Earl and his party. In those few seconds the case is altered and Crichton becomes the butler again, quicker than did ever frog in fairy-tale become the missing prince. The last scene shows the party home in Mayfair, Lady Mary about to wed the nincompoop Brocklehurst (surely so charming a person as she deserved a better fate) and Crichton, retired, about to wed

that dear Tweeny, and to be the landlord of a pub in the Harrow Road. Ernest has written the obvious book on the adventure, in which, says a reviewer: 'There are many kindly references to the two servants who were wrecked with the family, and Mr. Woolley pays the butler a glowing tribute in a footnote.' Loam is, as he was in the beginning, the self-same Earl of Loam.

The play, after a disastrous first night, became *the* success of 1902. And to me at least it is still among the three best modern plays I have ever seen. *Dear Brutus* and *Mary Rose* remain the other two of the trio.

[The Curtain of the third Act, the end of the island idyll, is of the supremacies:

LORD LOAM (*to the officer commanding the landing party*).

And here, sir, is our little home. Let me thank you in the name of us all, again and again and again.

OFFICER. Very proud, my lord. It is indeed an honour to have been able to assist so distinguished a gentleman as Lord Loam.

LORD LOAM. A glorious, glorious day. I shall show you our other rooms. Come, my pets. Come, Crichton. (*He has not meant to be cruel. He does not know he has said it. It is the old life that has come back to him. They all go. All leave CRICHTON except LADY MARY.*)

LADY MARY (*stretching out her arms to him*). Dear Gov., I will never give you up.

(*There is a salt smile on his face as he shakes his head to her. He lets the cloak slip to the ground. She will*



*not take this for an answer; again her arms go out to him. Then comes the great renunciation. By an effort of will he ceases to be an erect figure; he has the humble bearing of a servant. His hands come together as if he were washing them.)*

CRICHTON (*it is the speech of his life*). My lady.

(*She goes away. There is none to salute him now, unless we do it.*)

Crichton was played by H. B. Irving; it was the performance of his life too. Miss Irene Vanbrugh was Lady Mary, and I would not be surprised were that distinguished actress prouder of that part than of aught else in a career which holds so much to be proud of. Gerald du Maurier played Ernest with the aptest conception of Ernest's importance. Henry Kemble was Lord Loam to the utmost perfection. He added, were it possible, personality to that pontifical peer. One small mistake he made—or so I thought when I saw the play. In the lines quoted above, Loam bids Crichton accompany the party over the log-house. 'Come, Crichton,' says he. Kemble threw a sneer into the order where no sneer was called for. Loam is back in the old life; he addresses an employé in the old way, he has forgotten the immediate past, his tone should surely have been the dignified affability of every day?

Among criticisms of the play I find Mr. Archer saying that the 'author stands absolutely alone in dramatic literature,' which is a fact. He calls

Crichton, however, an attack on constituted social order, which is, of course, absurd. Another critic, I see, compares the play to the inflammatory writings of Rousseau and others which paved the red road to the Guillotine for France's aristocracy in 1780.

Kind-hearted critics cried out against the author's cruelty in sending Crichton to be the Gov. of a public-house in the Harrow Road. But surely it is the aim and intent of every butler, some day, to retire to a snug independence—to a self-owned public? Barrie does but fulfil his Crichton's destiny, his worthy and well-deserved ambition.

It is a mistake to go to plays, to those of Barrie or to those of any one else, and seek for meanings. There were those who sought political ends in *Alice in Wonderland* and the *Hunting of the Snark*. *The Admirable Crichton* is a masterpiece of slightly ironical comedy, founded, as I have supposed already, on Burns's well-known lines which declare that mere rank must give way to reality when the latter is combined with that touch of manly Nature which puts Jack on top of his master, like the lid on a porridge pot, far more surely than it makes the pair akin.

I have said that it is a mistake for play-goers to worry themselves as to meanings of plays; be content, say I, to go home happy. But it is

doubly a mistake for an author to try to explain and improve upon himself. In a revival of *Crichton*, in 1920, Crichton is made to foresee the War and himself a figure therein and thereafter. His union with the Tweeny is deleted. Crichton was the perfect butler, Tweeny and the pub in the Harrow Road makes his perfect apotheosis. Let us leave him there and be thankful.

*Quality Street* (as did *Crichton*, it appeared in 1902) is a costume Jane Austen, Molly Trefusis comedy-romance. The heroine wears ringlets, a custom I do not care for, since ringlets make a girl's face over-round and simpery. Here, as before and since, the Barrie gift makes improbability not only possible but probable. One asks oneself if the dashing Captain Valentine Brown would have been deceived by his middle-aged Phoebe's masquerade as her own imaginary niece, Miss Livvy, all ribbons and knots and fallals though the minx was? Why, of course he would have been; and he would, as he did, infinitely prefer the original.

This pretty piece has been revived several times; it will go on being so resuscitated until, as *The School for Scandal*, it becomes as classic a revenant as the Ghost in Hamlet.

One finds, at least I do, in the school marms, the Misses Susan and Phoebe Throssel (Miss Marion Terry and Miss Ellaline Terriss) of Quality

Street, the Misses Kitty ('dainty Miss Kitty, Miss Kitty with the roguish curls') and Alice Cray of the Hankey School. Miss Susan's cherished wedding gown, long prepared and never worn, is but an echo, or flutter, of Margaret Ogilvy's christening robe. Indeed, Quality Street, let it be in Bath or Tunbridge Wells, is really in Kirriemuir. And did you ask me to name for you an example of the Barrie sentiment at its most intangible and butterfly-bright, here it is.

*Little Mary* is another example of the typical Barrie, who has used the adjective 'uncomfortable' concerning it. The title was a joke played upon the play-going public, who discovered the jest only at the end, when Miss Nina Bòucicault, (Moirá Looney), in a clear and delightful Irish brogue, announced that Little Mary, the invisible Medium she had been employing (as instructed by her grandparent's pamphlet on how to cure the *malades imaginaires*, or otherwise, of the Best People), is *Stomach*. For 'Grandpa' had been convinced that the English aristocracy was digging its grave with its teeth. Grandpa's slogan was One Day One Dinner, or Home Rule for England. 'Little Mary' was a term which remained in regular use on the music-halls, and in everyday life, until after the War. Even our generation of to-day knows what is referred to do you mention her, though it is doubtful if they all

know how she originated. But it is the perfection of phraseology does an author invent a word or a sentence which becomes part of the language on its merits, a Topsy which the user imagines just to have grown. I refer to Topsy, though I am told that no one to-day has ever heard of her origin. She and Little Mary might perhaps be sisters. The joke of Little Mary was perhaps a courageous one to play after the first night, when, of course, the cat was out of the bag. It came boisterously off on the evening of September 24th 1903, and continued to do so, nightly, for a year. The dénouement never failed, though the house knew well what was coming. Yet if old friends and old wine are the best, surely an old joke may also be good? This the author knows as well as any one, or how could he finish his *Barbara's Wedding* thus:

(ELLEN gets from its shelf the best book for war-time.)

ELLEN. Which bit shall I read?

COLONEL. About Mr. Pickwick going into the lady's bedroom by mistake.

ELLEN. Ycs, dear, though you almost know it by heart. You see, you have begun to laugh already.

COLONEL. You are laughing too, Ellen. I can't help it!

In a criticism, a eulogy rather, of the play Mr. Walbrook says of the generosity of the public in such matters:

'There is, of course, nothing exceptional in this.

For years the same phenomenon has been observed in the case of the Savoy Operas, of which the jokes are known word for word by at least half the audience, and roared over when they come as though they were being heard for the first time. It is the old story of honest Diggory and Mr. Hardcastle's anecdote of Ould Grouse in the Gunroom, "I can't help laughing at that—ha! ha! ha! for the soul of me. We have laughed at that these twenty years—ha! ha! ha!" After all, there is a good deal of honest Diggory in most of us, and a good joke in a play or a book can be laughed at not for twenty years merely, but for a life-time. Obviously, too, there is the contagion of laughter in a crowded theatre to help the joke along.'

Yet we have never publicly been told the story of Ould Grouse, though the same has been told in the smoking-room.

*Little Mary* was superbly acted, and *Peter Pan* was to follow her, and with these the more important of the pre-War plays are done. Yet there remained a little melodrama, perfect of its brief sort, to mark the autumn of 1913. I refer to *Half an Hour*. The plot of the same is worth mentioning as an example of lucidity in brief. Lady Lilian Garson (a frozen flower) determines to leave her disagreeable husband for her lover, Hugh Paton. She does so, acquainting Garson in

a note which contains her wedding ring and which she leaves with her emeralds in a drawer in his desk. She goes to Hugh's flat. He is about to start for Egypt and he welcomes Lilian rapturously. He runs out to get a taxi and is knocked down by a motor. Hugh is carried into his rooms, a Doctor Brodie in attendance:

DR. BRODIE. Poor lady! I suppose you——

LILIAN. Tell me!

DR. BRODIE. He was run over by a motor bus. It is very serious.

LILIAN. Tell me!

DR. BRODIE. I must tell you. He is dead.

LILIAN. No, he isn't.

DR. BRODIE. He died as they picked him up.

LILIAN. It isn't true.

DR. BRODIE. A Mr. Paton, they tell me. I don't know him. I am a doctor and I happened to be passing. He only spoke one word.

LILIAN. My name?

DR. BRODIE. The word was Egypt.

LILIAN. He is going there. He had gone out for a taxi. So you see it can't be true.

DR. BRODIE. It is true, alas. (*He gets her into a chair.*) Mrs. Paton, I want to help you in any way possible. There seems to be no one in the house but a very useless man and a child. If you can give me the address of any male relative——

LILIAN (*starting up*). You mustn't bring anyone here.

DR. BRODIE. Just to help you with—I don't quite—Excuse me, are you Mrs. Paton? (*The pitiful look she gives him makes him avert his troubled eyes.*) I am sure you will understand that I have no wish

to intrude. But someone must communicate with the relatives. And of course an inquiry——

LILIAN. You mean I have no right to be here?

DR. BRODIE. I don't know whether you have a right or not. But you must know. (*As she shrinks from him*) Pardon me, I won't disturb you any longer.

LILIAN. Don't go. What am I to do?

DR. BRODIE. If it is well for him to have it publicly known that you were here you will of course remain; but if it would not be well for him, my advice to you—as you ask for it, unhappy lady—is to go at once.

LILIAN (*throwing out her arms*). Where am I to go?

DR. BRODIE. I know nothing of the circumstances. I am only telling you what I think might be best for him.

LILIAN (*dry-eyed*). Is there to be no thought of what would be best for me?

DR. BRODIE (*gently*). Might it not be best for you also?

LILIAN. I have nowhere to go—nowhere.

But Lilian goes home and dresses for dinner and, coming down late (no wonder), receives her husband's guests, among whom is a stranger—Dr. Brodie. Garson has meantime opened the drawer and, groping therein, found the emeralds but not the letter. As a joke he hides the emeralds, telling his guests where he has found them and what he has done with them:

GARSON. Brodie, my wife at last. I forgot, Lilian, whether I mentioned that Dr. Brodie had kindly promised to take pot-luck with us.

LILIAN. No, but I am so pleased, Dr. Brodie—any friend of my husband.



DR. BRODIE. Thank you, Lady Lilian.

MRS. REDDING. He has been telling us such a shocking story.

REDDING. It will spoil my dinner.

GARSON. Not quite, I hope, Redding.

REDDING. No, not quite.

*(They have both a gift for this sort of talk, and have many sunny times together.)*

MRS. REDDING. A man killed in the street. Tell her, Dr. Brodie.

DR. BRODIE. It wouldn't interest Lady Lilian.

GARSON. Yes, by the way it would. You will remember him, Lil.

LILIAN. Someone I know?

GARSON. Paton is the name. I think it was at the Rossiter's we met him.

LILIAN. A barrister?

GARSON. No, an engineer—abroad—in a small way.

LILIAN. A dark man, wasn't he?

DR. BRODIE. No, fair. Evidently if you ever knew him, Lady Lilian, you have forgotten him.

LILIAN. One meets so many.

DR. BRODIE. Just so.

MRS. REDDING. There was a woman in it, Lady Lilian. Do get him to tell us.

LILIAN (*boldly*). Why not?

DR. BRODIE. Very well. I assure you I pitied her when I thought she was his wife, and still more when I found she wasn't.

GARSON. That sort of woman!

LILIAN. What sort of woman, Richard?

GARSON (*with delicacy*). Oh, come!

DR. BRODIE. She kept crying, what could she do.

GARSON. She knew what she could do!

LILIAN. What could she do, Richard?

GARSON. Pooh! They don't all get run over by motor buses, my dear.

DR. BRODIE. I thought she might find a job—women do nowadays—and live on, true to the dead. After all, it was the test of her.

LILIAN. I suppose it was.

GARSON. What a sentimental fellow you are, Brodie! That kind can look after themselves all right. I say, Redding, suppose she is a married woman and has bolted back to unsuspecting No. 1!

REDDING. Lordy!

DR. BRODIE. When she left the house at my request I couldn't have thought so despicably of her as that.

LILIAN. It is more abject than my husband's—other end for her?

DR. BRODIE. I should say, yes.

REDDING. It's quite possible, you know, Garson. Makes a pretty chump of the husband, though.

GARSON. No doubt, and yet there is humour in it. You don't see, Brodie, that it has its humorous side?

DR. BRODIE. Oh yes, I do, Garson. But as I walked here I was picturing her in dire desolation.

LILIAN. Don't you think she may be in dire desolation still?

DR. BRODIE. Thinking it over, Lady Lilian, I have come to the conclusion that your husband is right, and that I was a sentimental fellow, wasting my sympathy on that lady.

GARSON (*who is not unsusceptible to praise*). Exactly.  
(*Dinner is announced, and he is indicating to BRODIE to take in LADY LILIAN, when MRS. REDDING, the only one who has remembered the jewellery, touches her throat and wrists significantly. He gives her and her husband a private wink.*)

Hullo, Lil, where are those emeralds? Didn't you get 'em out of me specially for that frock?

*(Only one of the company, a new acquaintance, notices his hostess go rigid for a moment. So her husband has found the jewels! Something inside her that is clamouring for utterance is about to betray her, when she sees a glance pass from her husband to the drawer. She is uncertain how much has been found out, but she cannot believe that if this man knows everything he could have had the self-control to play cat to her for so long.)*

LILIAN *(taking a risk)*. I took them off down here and left them for safety in one of your drawers.

GARSON. Which drawer?

LILIAN *(crossing to it)*. This one.

GARSON *(making a sign with his fingers behind his back to the REDDINGS)*. Best put them on; I like you in 'em.

*(He tosses her his keys, and as she opens the drawer he has another gleeful moment with his accomplices.*

*BRODIE, whose attention is confined to her, understands that somehow a crisis has been reached, and oddly enough he does not want her to be caught.)*

LILIAN *(turning round aghast)*. They are gone!

GARSON *(histrionically)*. Gone?

LILIAN. Richard, what is to be done? My emeralds!

GARSON. Gone! The police——

LILIAN. Yes, yes!

MRS. REDDING. Mr. Garson, how can you keep it up?

Don't you see she is nearly fainting, and so should I be. Emeralds!

GARSON *(with the conqueror's good nature)*. Come, come, Lil, calm yourself. This should be a lesson to you, though. But it's all right—just a trick I was playing on you. I found them in the drawer.

REDDING (*admiringly*). Never was such a masterpiece at a trick as Garson!

GARSON (*producing the jewels from his pocket like a wizard*). Here they are!

(*He gallantly places them on her person, and even gives her a peck, which brings him very near to something she is holding in her hand beneath her handkerchief. GARSON takes in MRS. REDDING, and REDDING has to go without a lady. Before LILIAN follows them she throws a letter into the fire, and as the little spitfire turns to ashes she puts on her finger a wedding-ring that she has taken out of it. She reels for a moment, then looks to BRODIE for his commentary. He has none, but as a medical man he feels her pulse.*)

As a short play I prefer *Half an Hour* to any. It has but one fault. It does not provide, nor does it give a hint of such a provision, for the future of Lilian Garson. Garson is intolerable and Lilian is an intolerant darling. I dare say, however, that her creator provided her, one of his children, with a suitable Fairyland although he has said nothing about it. Anyhow, *pace* Brodie, it was a perfectly natural thing that she should return home in the first instance, though indeed she was the lucky one, almost long-armedly and coincidentally so, in that her letter had not been found.

With this fragment the output of pre-War years ended. Of the War plays, *A Kiss for Cinderella* and *Dear Brutus* were the plays of sheer romantic

refreshment and of optimism which sent an audience out into the dark streets again, happy, grateful and reassured. If Sir James Barrie had done nothing more for his countrymen than present them, in the black years, with these two stimulating and starry gifts, he had done better than most. One saw them, and forgetting for a few hours, presently went out into the troubles of the times again the better for both and perhaps the braver.

I have said how mistaken a thing it is for an audience or any one else to hunt for hidden meanings in beautiful things. As well might a man seek for gold at the foot of the rainbow. And I am sorry to think that Mr. W. Gillette was able to read a letter from Sir James Barrie to the American audience who assembled at The Empire Theatre, New York, for the first night of *Dear Brutus* in the United States. The letter says:

'*Dear Brutus* is an allegory about a gentleman called John Bull, who years and years ago missed the opportunity of his life. The "Mr. Dearth" of the play is really John Bull. The play shows how on the fields of France father and daughter get a second opportunity. Are now the two to make it up permanently or for ever to drift apart? A second chance comes to few. As for a third chance, who ever heard of it? It's now or never. If it is now, something will have been accom-

plished greater than war itself. Future mankinds are listening for our decision. If we cannot rise to this second chance ours will be the blame, but the sorrow will be posterity's.'

It may be said that no man has a better right to his opinion than the author? Let those who say so look for sermons in stones; they will not find what is dowdy and political in Lob's enchanted woodland.

The great play of the post-War period was *Mary Rose*, written, so it is said, in reply to the challenge of a lady who demanded a play 'about a ghost.' *Mary Rose* was an adequate answer. But the challenger ought to have remembered that beautiful little piece, *A Well-remembered Voice*, a playlet written around the new Spiritualism which brought so much of comfort during the War years and which continues to show true and comforting the promises of the New Testament. She might almost equally well have recalled *Barbara's Wedding*. But, if *Mary Rose* came of her challenge, she, the challenger, is to be thanked, though the play, to my mind, is more elfin than it is the asked-for psychic.

The last offspring of the Barrie inspiration, born out of due theatrical time, born in fact in 1936, was *The Boy David*. *David* came six years later than *Miss Julie Logan*, that lovely story which, had its author written nothing else, would surely

have given him a niche among the men of letters. *David* may have been the golden wind-cock which the playwright desired to see raised, a bright, culminating signal, high above the strong tower of works which, throughout the years, his wit had built. He may have meant, wistfully, thus to test the unsteady wind of popularity.

In his choice of subject he was as original as ever. No playwright before him has chosen to attempt the brave experiment which takes a Bible story, from the Old Testament or the New, and, without material addition or subtraction, produces it as a play, I say this remembering that Wilde's distorted and erotic *Salome* was never acted on the English stage. James Barrie may have seen how yearly the old *contes* popularly serve the pantomime stage—*Jack the Giant-Killer*, *Puss in Boots*, *Cinderella*. Why should he not put the fairy-tale of David and Goliath to a similar use?

Mr. Granville Barker, who writes a preface to the published play, begins, I see, by quoting a criticism of it which maintains that *David* is the play which James Barrie might have written before he left Scotland. 'The Boy David keeps his sheep on the hills of Kirriemuir.' Surely not? The *baaing*, black-face droves are not of Israel? Youth, at any rate the Barrie youth, would have taken no plot at second hand. Or, that done, it

would have been to give an old tale some daring or whimsical twist which would have exchanged an old lamp, or Auld Licht, for a new. The unsentimental soldier-country folk of *David*, least of all 'the steerin' mither strang a-fit,' are not the sentimentalists of Thrums of whom a *Punch* reviewer wrote, almost prophetically, long ago:

Let pessimists potter and pule, let Philistines slaughter  
and harry;

Give me *Hendry* and *Tammas* and *Jess* and a smile  
and a tear born of Barrie.

In *David* are practically no smiles (one would hardly expect them), and one rarely weeps over a story of which the end is known of old.

Beyond the subject there is not much of the Barrie originality in *David*. And her son could never have said of Margaret as cries David of his mother, 'this little nameless woman of inexhaustible energy': 'She is *not* weak! She will let none belt me but herself. There is in all Bethlehem no woman who can lay it on as my mother does.'

David, as Barrie has conceived him, is not the young David of the Bible, who is, as I imagine him, a handsome, plucky, boastful well-grown cockerel, choleric of eye, frank and 'ruddy of countenance' with a dash of hasty red in his hair. Barrie has made David a child of twelve, a Jack the Giant-Killer, a Peter, who can cry (as the last



two heroes would have scorned to cry) 'Not unto us.'

I understand (I did not see *David* on the stage) that the play did not 'act well,' owing possibly to the author's ill-health which prevented him from guiding it through rehearsal. Its failure to please the critics is said to have been a real grief to James Barrie, possibly because he felt that small time was left to him here wherein to make a fresh success heal the smart of the mis-hit.

But to read *David* is a delight. Throughout, the stage directions, for the fulfilment of which the author places himself, most brotherly in his producer's hands, are in the meticulous Barrie mode. We are told to picture Saul as Rembrandt painted him. The garments throughout must be those of Israelite custom. And when the men of Saul are facing the Philistines they do so thus:

'The SLINGERS carry their slings, but the ban against fighting is still in force and the SLINGERS are prohibited from using their weapons. They, however, demonstrate with them as they shout. It is mainly an outburst of cries and vituperations of a deafening kind between the seen ISRAELITES and the unseen PHILISTINES, so that the actual words are little heard though they will be supplied. They are animals thirsting to be at each other in an eruption of barbaric declamation and big gestures such as are inconceivable nowadays: shouts, taunts,

etc., poured forth across the glade like lava, and the wilderness of the scene can only be rendered by a producer acquainted with the stage representation of Old Testament turbulent incidents.'

Now and then only do we find a trace of the Barrie of Thrums or of Peter. I see a little of Leeby, the inventorial, in this exchange between Saul and David:

DAVID. How many sheep had you?

SAUL. Five hundred, it may be, when I returned from a fray.

DAVID (*astounded*). Five hundred! No! And kine?

SAUL. I forget how many.

DAVID (*scandalised*). Forget how many!

SAUL (*seating himself and speaking with apparent gravity*). Listen. I had two camels and an olive press, and my well was bricked.

DAVID (*gasping*). Bricked! (*Boasting*) Nevertheless there is no water like to the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate.

SAUL. That may be so, but I had a fig-tree that bore twice in the year.

DAVID (*who stands near him with legs wide apart and head thrust forward—impressed*). Truly you were in a big way! We have a hundred sheep and twenty goats, he's and she's. (*Making the best of his case*) My mother has a flagon shaped like a camel and two painted glasses.

SAUL (*handsomely*). I never had that. But, David, I had——

(SAUL is falling under the spell of DAVID, who takes it all seriously.)



ELISABETH BERGNER  
as 'The Boy David'



DAVID. Do not tell me that you had a he-goat that danced.

SAUL. Ah me, none of my goats danced.

DAVID (*proudly*). Two of my father's goats dance, as thus. (*He shows.*)

SAUL. Would that I had seen them! But, David, I had three fields of onions.

DAVID (*overthrown*). Three—fields—of onions! (*Anxiously*) But had you a vine that grew upside down?

SAUL. Never.

DAVID (*ashamed of boasting*). Neither had we. But my father travelleth far. Consider of this. He has seen—a bed with four legs!

And, in *David*, I see a little of Peter when Saul says:

What does a shepherd smell, David, that causes him to 'dance with the he-goats and the she-goats and makes the grass to arise and dance with them?

(DAVID *has been listening anxiously.*)

DAVID (*with a shout and making several syllables of the word*). Rain!

SAUL. A stream ran through my land, David.

DAVID (*incredulous*). With water in it? (SAUL *nods.*)  
No!

SAUL. Now tell me (*unbelieving*)—if you can—what is the tree in which there is ever a whispering as of voices in the highest branches?

DAVID (*after reflecting*). The mulberry! There is always a going-on in the tops of the mulberries. (*He is getting wildly excited.*)

SAUL. This one will defeat you. At what time of the year had I and my servants—men and women—at what season of the year had we all purple legs?

DAVID (*gloriously*). At the treading of the grape!

*(He jumps up and down to show how it is done. Then, in an outburst, he cries):* Shall we be friends, O Shepherd?

SAUL *(like a boy)*. We are.

And again I find an echo of Peter the Pirate Killer when the conqueror of Goliath (or Hook) exhibits his trophies:

SAUL. Shall we go into your tent, David, and talk—but on a different matter?

DAVID *(gaily)*. Let us. *(He stops SAUL.)* Nay, first wait till I clap my hands. Next, do you pull the opening both ways—wide—and then—lo, you shall see what you shall see.

*(SAUL nods. DAVID disappears into the tent. SAUL makes sure to his satisfaction that he is alone in the glade—he ponders darkly. The clapping of the hands is heard. He pulls the opening of the tent to its widest and then looks at the picture that has been prepared for him. It is DAVID standing majestically, posing as GOLIATH, with the helmet on his head and his two hands grasping the hilt of the spear, which is otherwise trailing on the ground.)*

DAVID *(motionless)*. What think you?

SAUL *(who finds it difficult not to be enamoured of this boy)*. Is this the man of Gath come back to life?

DAVID *(pleased but reassuring)*. Not truly. Saul, it is your David! Behold! *(He struggles to raise the spear vainly, as he strikes a new attitude.)*

SAUL. It is most memorable—though not thus do captains usually carry their spears.

It may be that *David* will be staged again and meet with a better fortune. The published book

is a sure foundation; a Phoenix does not live by ash alone, and the fire is not out.

All the great modern interpreters played in the Barrie plays, and Sir James Barrie would surely have been the first to admit what he owed to them—to Ellen Terry, to H. B. Irving, great son of a great father, and to all. Indispensable among the players seems to me to have been Gerald du Maurier, who almost more than any other was able to identify himself with the very conceptions of the author, to lose himself entirely in these conceptions. He was the perfect Hook, wiggled and saturnine as the second Charles. He was Ernest Woolley to the very Ernest. He was the degraded and slightly tipsy Dearth as no other could have shown him, Dearth who is not without a humorous outlook on his own degradation. The Barrie interpreters on this side of the Atlantic and on the other were worthy of their Barrie as he of them. Nor was he ever slow in acknowledging a debt to them.

When Miss Hilda Trevelyan played Maggie (in *What Every Woman Knows*), Barrie liked her work so much that he cabled Frohman about it on the opening night. When the actress went down to breakfast the next morning to read what the newspapers said about her she found on her plate a cable from Frohman doubling her salary. It was Frohman's answer to Barrie.

The Barrie plays will, I think, live because of their happiness and humanity. They will be revived to delight Londoners unborn when the saturnine satire and paradox of, let's say, Mr. Shaw have been long dead and well forgotten.



## CHAPTER VIII

WHAT quality, I wonder, most endears a man to his fellows of every day? Not, I think, the cardinal virtues, for, while one admires and respects courage and probity, one does not, merely because of them, love their possessor. Nor does the milk of human kindness and generosity alone always command affection. That milk is a commodity apt to be as much taken for granted as is the milk on the doorstep of a morning. We could not do without it, but we speak of it in terms of tea or coffee.

Nor is unqualified humour a safe thing to name as a short-cut to the affection of one's friends. For humour is as dangerous a thing as is a loaded gun. If it is employed carelessly (the man who possesses humour is often far more casual in his use of it than he would be with my hypothetical gun) it can hurt. If it is difficult to leave an ill-tempered word unsaid, it is doubly difficult to refrain from a smart one. No man prides himself on his bad temper, secretly he is ashamed of it, but most of us are inwardly pleased with ourselves when we gain a laugh, however that result is arrived at.

If we think of the things we have laughed at in life we must, I fear, admit that fifty per cent. of the same have been barbed affairs and tipped with the venom of malice in the greater degree or the lesser. If we ourselves are not the mark of the hornet shaft we laugh indeed, but we fear the shooter rather than love him. If we are the target we hate the archer. We remember, and some dark night our chance comes to slay him.

De Quincey has said, in his *Essay on Murder as a Fine Art*, that many an unfortunate can trace his first step on the downward path to some murder he thought lightly of at the time. We would slay the man who has made a laughing-stock of us more lightly than he who has robbed us. His death would be on his own head, but our subsequent downfall would remain at his, much too funny, door.

Men in authority who may not be answered back, such as Judges of the High Court and Masters of Fox-hounds, are, have the gods given them the ready tongue, in wit, the worst offenders. Nobody likes them the better for their arrow-shots. They get a laugh and that is all, and as a rule they incur the undying dislike of their victim, however well he may know that he has courted their discharge.

The great Duke of Wellington was adept at the shattering mot. On the occasion of a Mayfair reception at which His Grace was present, a

certain blundering brigadier who had served in the Peninsular with more personal courage than military genius desired to be presented to the Field-Marshal. His host, knowing something of his service, endeavoured to dissuade the rash soldier. This being impossible, the presentation was made. The Duke was all affability. 'So-and-so?' (says he). 'So-and-so—why, of course I remember you. Thought I'd had you shot. Know I *meant* to—a glass of wine?' I do not suppose that the Duke added a whit to his popularity by this speech, and I am sure that his subordinate must, from henceforth on, have hated him.

The Law Courts, Scottish and English, have heard many such pleasantries. And in the Scots tongue a pleasantry sounds ever more of a pleasantry than in the English. Consider such a book as *Wee Macgregor*. Were the dialogue not in the Doric its salt would be gone.

Does one add a kindliness to wit, does one prefer to tip one's shafts with honey rather than gall, does one win the true laughter rather than the cynic chuckle, why, that is to possess the real heart appeal and a better way to popularity than a tun of free beer.

The Scots tongue, as mentioned above, has the good quality of printing well. The Scots humour is very quotable—a hundred books, from Dean Ramsay's down, demonstrate the fact. A Scots

story can be more often amusing without being vulgar than can an English one or an Irish one.

Sir James Barrie was a sort of Cerberus in humour, for he seemed to possess three heads of it. And no one of the three was bitter or contemptuous. All his humour is, on the contrary, kindly and intellectual, and here and there it gets into the deepest heart of matters.

Scotland has not a reputation for jokes without difficulty, so it is the more wonderful to reflect that her literature is so very fairly prolific in humorists. Scott, Stevenson and Lang have the divine spark, and possibly it burned in Burns too before their day. Barrie, 'Anstey' Guthrie and Kenneth Grahame have carried on the torch.

The three Barrie humours seem to be these. There is the one-third tender, one-third playful, one-third pawky, humour of Thrums. There is the pure and simple humour of Mr. Punch, which may be found in *My Lady Nicotine* and *When a Man's Single*—also in *The Young Visitors*. There is the intellectual leg-pulling, the pungent perfection and lovely comedy of such plays as *Dear Brutus* or *Crichton* or *Little Mary*. And yet there are not three Barries but one Barrie. And all his humours are logical or are cunningly made so to appear. And all may be said to be placidly enjoying their own not heady fun even along with such spontaneous comedy as the last Act in *The*

*Admirable Crichton* or the courting of T'nowhead's Bell in Thrums.

The humorist in Thrums belies me, of course, as to a necessary mutual enjoyment of humour between the jester and his audience:

"Is that a' the story?" asked T'nowhead. Tammas had been looking at us queerly.

"There's no nane o' ye lauchin' like onything."

"But what was't he lauched at?"

"Ou," said Tammas, "a humorist doesna tell whaur the humour comes in."

"No, but when you said that, did ye mean it to be humorous?"

"Am no sayin' I did; but, as I've been tellin' ye, humour spouts oot by itsel'."

"Ay, but do ye ken noo what the Earl's son gaed awa lauchin' at?"

Tammas hesitated.

"I dinna exactly see't," he confessed, "but that's no an oncommon thing. A humorist would often no ken 'at he was ane if it wasna by the wy he maks other fowk lauch. A body canna be expeckit baith to mak the joke an' to see't. Na, that would be doin' twa fowks' wark."

"Weel, that's reasonable enough; but I've often seen ye lauchin'," said Hendry, "lang afore other fowk lauched."

"Nae doubt," Tammas explained, "an' that's because humour has twa sides, juist like a penny

piece. When I say a humorous thing mysel I'm dependent on other fowk to tak note o' the humour o't, bein' mysel ta'en up wi' the makkin' o't. Ay, but there's things I see an' hear 'at maks me lauch, an' that's the other side o' humour."

"I never heard it put sae plain afore," said T'nowhead.'

And throughout his triple ripple of fun Barrie goes not once to the inspiring tutelage of the national bard, goes not once to whisky as the fount of wit. Barrie never in his life had a drappie in his literary e'e. He has never, I suspect, said or sung that notwithstanding the crowing cock or the daw'ing day, he would still partake of the barley bree. He says of London public-houses that he has only once entered one but, nevertheless, 'I have been wilder than that.'

Indeed you will remember that the Reverend Adam Yestreen will not give the 'bluid of Scots' a name.

Barrie has been spoken' of as the Puck of letters, and Puck is no Scot. And therefore Puck can have no part in Thrums. Nor did Puck attempt a part there. The Thrums humour is either a tender jesting with sorrow or the broad and pawky comedy of the courtship of Bell. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch calls this wooing as comely a bit of comedy as ever came out of Scotland. For that good reason I quote from it:

“Sanders, Sanders,” said Sam’l, in a voice strangely unlike his own, “it’ll a’ be ower by this time the morn.”

“It will,” said Sanders.

“If I had only kent her langer,” continued Sam’l.

“It wad hae been safer,” said Sanders.

“Did ye see the yallow floor in Bell’s bonnet?” asked the accepted swain.

“Ay,” said Sanders, reluctantly.

“I’m dootin’—I’m sair dootin’ she’s but a flichty, licht-hearted crittur after a’.”

“I had ay my suspeccions o’t,” said Sanders.

“Ye hae kent her langer than me,” said Sam’l.

“Yes,” said Sanders, “but there’s nae gettin’ at the heart o’ women. Man, Sam’l, they’re desperate cunnin’.”

“I’m dootin’t; I’m sair dootin’t.”

“It’ll be a warnin’ to ye, Sam’l, no to be in sich a hurry i’ the futur,” said Sanders.

Sam’l groaned. . . .

“Sanders,” he cried.

“Sam’l?”

“Ye hae been a guid friend to me, Sanders, in this sair affliction.”

“Nothing ava,” said Sanders; “dount mention’d.”

“But, Sanders, ye canna deny but what your

rinnin' oot o' the kirk that awfu' day was at the bottom o'd a'."

"It was so," said Sanders, bravely.

"An' ye used to be fond o' Bell, Sanders."

"I dinna deny't."

"Sanders, laddie," said Sam'l, bending forward and speaking in a wheedling voice, "I aye thocht it was you that she likit."

"I had some sic idca mysel," said Sanders.

"Sanders, I canna think to pairt twa fowk sae weel suited to ane anither as you an' Bell."

"Canna ye, Sam'l?"

"She wad mak ye a guid wife, Sanders. I hae studied her weel, and she's a thrifty, douce, clever lassie. Sanders, there's no the like o' her. Mony a time, Sanders, I hae said to mysel, There's a lass ony man might be proud to tak. A'body says the same, Sanders. There's nae risk ava, man; nane to speak o'. Tak her, laddie, tak her, Sanders; it's a grand chance, Sanders. She's yours for the speirin'. I'll gie her up, Sanders."

"Will ye, though?" said Sanders.

"What d'ye think?" asked Sam'l.

"If ye wid rayther," said Sanders, politely.

"There's my han' on't," said Sam'l. "Bless ye, Sanders; ye've been a true frien' to me."

'Then they shook hands for the first time in their lives; and soon afterwards Sanders struck up the brae to T'nowhead.



'Next morning Sanders Elshioner, who had been very busy the night before, put on his Sabbath clothes and strolled up to the manse.

"But—but where is Sam'l?" asked the minister; "I must see himself."

"It's a new arrangement," said Sanders.

"What do you mean, Sanders?"

"Bell's to marry me," explained Sanders.

"But—but what does Sam'l say?"

"He's willin'," said Sanders.

"And Bell?"

"She's willin' too. She prefers't."

"It is unusual," said the minister.

"It's a' richt," said Sanders.

"Well, you know best," said the minister. . . .

'Years afterwards it was said in Thrums that Sam'l had treated Bell badly, but he was never sure about it himself.

"It was a near thing—a mighty near thing," he admitted in the square.

"They say," some other weaver would remark, "'at it was you Bell liked best."

"I d'na ken," Sam'l would reply, "but there's nae doot the lassie was fell fond o' me. Ou, a mere passin' fancy's ye nicht say."

This bandying about of Bell between her two wooers is certainly comely and of good report, but it is farce, and were I to choose the most human example of the Thrums communal humour it

would be the chapter called 'Preparing to Receive Company' which occurs in *A Window*. Herein the long-suffering Hendry McQumphy is instructed in the rudiments of company manners while the house is redd up in preparation for the arrival of the callers who had counted on taking Jess by surprise.

To enjoy humour at its best, it should be the humour which can be applied to the everyday matter. To invent a farcical situation and treat of it farcically gets a laugh, but not the better laugh enjoyed by the reader who can see himself, or herself, in just the predicament in which the author's puppets are placed. No sane Benedict-to-be can imagine himself as either Samuel or Sanders. But each one of us has hastily brushed his hair or powdered her nose on hearing voices in the porch and the unexpected ringing of the front-door bell.

But there are, of course, two ways of telling the story of such an experience. And when the pen is Barrie's pen, I feel that even the smallest things of life which are related have been realised by the writer. Which is why I prefer him in the commonplace situation rather than in the farcical.

The Barrie reputation for humour was made in *Thrums* and added to by *My Lady Nicotine*. *My Lady's* fun is touched with the contemporary failings of Jerome and other knockabout humor-

ists of her moment. I have already alluded to her as the *fons et origo* of *Walker, London* and as the inspiration of 'Primus' and the epistolary method of telling a story. Possibly it was the earlier publication of these letters, or some very like to them, in the *St. James's Gazette* which introduced the second head of Cerberus (the humorous dog I have referred to earlier in this chapter) to the public. For Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, reviewing *Sentimental Tommy* in 1896, thus opens his column:

'I feel a reasonable shyness in confessing that my introduction to the most romantic of all my literary loves was brought about by a Press-cutting agency. Some time in the winter of 1887-88 I received a parcel of cuttings, which included one from the *St. James's Gazette* entitled "Meade *Primus* to his Proud Parent." The reader will find something very much like it by turning to chap. xx of his copy of *My Lady Nicotine*, by J. M. Barrie. At this time, however, and for a year or two after, I did not know the author's name; I only knew that this man's humour differed in a subtle way from other men's humour, and hoped that when next he set forth to write about boys I might be there to read.'

Throughout the novels, which were only a stepping-stone to their author's real mission in

life, the making of plays, it seems that the Barrie mind was revolving like the machine which used, in shop windows, to turn out before the eyes of childhood the long, striped sticks of candy; the pages were coming out in strips of pathos, humour and farce. The artificial stripes of laughter and tears appear in regular sequence. Sometimes these stripes agree to perfection:

‘I dreamt that I too was twenty-six, which was a long time ago, and that I took train to a place called my home, whose whereabouts I see not in my waking hours; and when I alighted at the station a dear lost love was waiting for me, and we went away together. She met me in no ecstasy of emotion, nor was I surprised to find her there; it was as if we had been married for years and parted for a day. I like to think that I gave her some of the things to carry.’

Sometimes it seems that this determination to be funny or pitiful by turn is disfiguring to an excellently constructed story, *e.g.* it would seem as though there is, in *Sentimental Tommy*, no need for the ephemeral Reddy. The child, according to plot, is entirely uncalled for except that her gratuitous death provides a passing shadow to follow hot on the humour of Tommy’s discovery of Thrums-in-Bow. On one page we have that cheerful young lady, the pantomimic Bob, chucking Tommy under the chin with her toe, and on the next

Reddy is gone: 'Reddy, who had been lent to two people for a little while, and when that time was up she blew a kiss to them and ran gleefully back to God.' But Reddy had no need to have been born. Possibly we ought not to blame the author for Reddy. He has brought a charge against his females, against his children and against the very fays who, coming into his books absolutely uninvited, give themselves characters the very opposite of those with which he would label them. Wendy, herself, we are told, 'forced her way' into *Peter Pan*.

The heroines were ever the worst, all very obedient and pleasant till they were in the book, and then 'you are a lucky author if you know them by sight the week after.' So possibly Reddy (with her beautiful red-brown hair and her trick of opening her eyes wide when she looked at you), a potential heroine, a Watercress Girl even, just took the bit between her teeth and bolted, and therefore came the end of her.

If in this wilful way heroines go, how do they come? How indeed! But I think it would be fair guessing to say how Ethel Monticue came into being. A reader maintains that Miss Monticue is not a Barrie heroine? But she could have been the heroine of no one else. She arose of the photograph taken, let us say, in 1880, of a Miss Daisy Ashford, who may or may not (many

children *do*) have kept a scribbling-book at the time her parents commanded her *carte de visite*.

To the Barrie humour, the photograph once seen, the book was as shelling peas to 'the innocent wondering mind that thought of it.' I admit that Sir James Barrie in his preface to *The Young Visitors* states that the publishers are guarantors that the book is the unaided effort in fiction of an authoress of nine years. I remain unconvinced as to the authoress, and, anyhow, Sir James Barrie has the lowest opinion of the integrity of publishers. He has said that a certain author was executed for murdering a publisher. When the author was on the drop he bade good-bye to the chaplain and to the reporters. He then saw some publishers sitting in the proud front seats below the scaffold. To them he did not say good-bye. To them he said instead, 'See you later.'

But, jest apart, a connoisseur in Barrie can only come to one conclusion as to the authorship of the small classic in question, which is that either Miss Ashford, she being nine years old, has plagiarised Sir James Barrie, or that he has throughout his career plagiarised her.

If the reader will not have it so and wants chapter and verse of me, I would say that in 1880, when the MS. of the book was said to be written, little girls (and many big ones) as a general rule had small knowledge of bathrooms 'with lovely

white baths and sparkling taps.' The nursery and the usual sort of guest-chamber enjoyed the hip bath and knew nothing better. Even in splendid Harthover House, Ellie, the 'little white lady,' must have a bath in her room and, it appears, a cold one at that.

Queen Victoria reigned at Buckingham Palace, and no loyal little girl, denying her Majesty the right to hold her own 'levie,' would arrogate that duty to a mere man, Prince of Wales though he were and though he wore a lovely ermine cloak and a small but costly crown.

• If the caviller cavils further, I would ask him to read the chapter called 'The Siege of Thrums' in his *Sentimental Tommy*. I would ask him to compare such dialogue as the following with the dialogue of the *Visitors*:

"Ay, 'tis too true. But canst thou blame me if I grow sad? The town still in the enemy's hands, and so much brave blood already spilt in vain. Knowest thou that the brave Kinnordy fell last night? My noble Kinnordy!"

'Here Stroke covers his face with his hands, weeping silently, and—and there is an awkward pause.

'("Go on—'Still have me.'")

'("So it is.") "Weep not, my royal scone——"

'("Scion.")

. . . . .

““Ah, my trusty foster-brother, knowest thou not what it is to love?”

““Alas! I too have had my fling. (Does Grizel kiss your hand yet?)”

“(“No, she winna, the limmer.) Sir Joseph, I go to her.”

““Methinks she is a haughty onion. I prithee go not to-night.”

““I have given my word.”

““Thy word is a band.”

““Adieu, my friend.”

““Methinks thou ghost to thy damn. (Did we no promise Elspeth there should be no swearing?)”

‘The raft Vick Ian Vohr is dragged to the shore, and Stroke steps on board, a proud solitary figure. “Farewell!” he cries hoarsely, as he seizes the oar.

““Farewell, my leech,” answers Corp.’

You may say if you will that Sir James Barrie did not describe Miss Monticue’s wedding gifts:

‘The Earl of Clincham sent a charming gift of some hem stitched sheets edged with real lace and a photo of himself in a striking attitude. Mr. Salteena sent Ethel a bible with a few pious words of advice and regret and he sent Bernard a very handy little camp stool. Ethels parents were too poor to come so far but her Mother sent her a gold watch which did not go but had been some years in the family and her father provided a cheque for £2 and promised to send her a darling



little baby calf when ready. Then they ordered the most splendid refreshments they had tea and coffee and sparkling wines to drink also a lovely wedding cake of great height with a sugar angel at the top holding a sword of almond paste.'

I remain unshaken in the faith that no one other than my choice could have provided such gifts. But if I pinned my faith to any one paragraph in the book it should be that which finishes chapter 8:

'Yes do muttered Bernard always welcome Clincham old boy he added placing his blue crickit cap on his head and so saying he and Ethel left the gay scene and once more oozed fourth into the streets of London.'

The verb 'to ooze' instead of 'to issue' seems to clinch my argument. A similar play ('canister' = 'sinister') is made in *Peter Pan*, 'Dark and canister man' (says Peter to Hook), 'have at thee!'

You say I raise a point of authorship such as has not been raised since the Shakespeare-Bacon controversy? Then I will say, as Ben Jonson said of Bacon, that did Sir James Barrie *not* write *The Young Visitors*, then he missed the opportunity of a life-time.

It is the manner of the Barrie plays which makes the man and the humour of him. I do not look for this typical humour in such robust fooling as is *Walker, London*. Nor do I seek it in the main

idea of such a crafty leg-pulling piece as is *Little Mary*. Nor do I name any one play, saying, 'Here is the great example of the Barrie humour,' For no such play exists to which I could point such a finger. Rather would I seek that intangible thing (it falls as lightly as the dew on Parnassus) throughout direction and text of all the plays. It is here, it is there. It is in everything much as I understand gold to be. It is in the shyness between father and son as shown in *The New Word* and in other places. It is in the inspired stage-trick of demanding of an audience that it should express a belief in fairies by clapping. It is in such a whimsy as lies in the *Just So* description of how Harlequin got his official costume, his coat of clouts and patches:

'In the far-back days when the world was so young that the pieces of the original egg-shell still adhered to it, one boy was so desperately poor that he alone of children could not don fancy dress on fair days. Presently the other children were sorry for this drab one, so each of them clipped a little bit off his dress and gave it to him.'

It is also in the comedy of such a 'raiser' as *The Twelve-Pound Look*, which has a jewel, a perfect bit of Barrie ware, as its final Curtain. Sir Harry Sims's first wife, who, preferring the life of a typist, and who, having saved twelve pounds of her own to buy a machine, has left the

deadly fellow, calls from an agency to do some work for him. The typist talks to the present Lady Sims while she waits (typing as she waits a sample of her secretarial style) Sir Harry's pleasure. Sir Harry naturally prefers to employ some one other than his former Kate, who leaves the house.

LADY SIMS (*whose tendency is to say the wrong thing*).

She seemed such a capable woman.

SIR HARRY (*on his hearth*). I don't like her style at all.

LADY SIMS (*meekly*). Of course you know best. (*This is the right kind of woman.*)

SIR HARRY (*rather anxious for corroboration*). Lord, how she winced when I said I was to give you those ropes of pearls.

LADY SIMS. Did she? I didn't notice. I suppose so.

SIR HARRY (*frowning*). Suppose? Surely I know enough about women to know that.

LADY SIMS. Yes, oh yes.

SIR HARRY (*odd that so confident a man should ask this*).

Emmy, I know you well, don't I? I can read you like a book, eh?

LADY SIMS (*nervously*). Yes, Harry.

SIR HARRY (*jovially, but with an enquiring eye*). What a different existence yours is from that poor lonely wretch's.

LADY SIMS. Yes, but she has a very contented face.

SIR HARRY (*with a stamp of his foot*). All put on. What?

LADY SIMS (*timidly*). I didn't say anything.

SIR HARRY (*snapping*). One would think you envied her.

LADY SIMS. Envied? Oh no—but I thought she looked so alive. It was while she was working the machine.

SIR HARRY. Alive! That's no life. It is you that are alive. (*Curtly*) I'm busy, Emmy. (*He sits at his writing-table.*)

LADY SIMS (*dutifully*). I'm sorry; I'll go, Harry. (*Inconsequentially*) Are they very expensive?

SIR HARRY. What?

LADY SIMS. Those machines?

(*When she has gone the possible meaning of her question startles him. The curtain hides him from us, but we may be sure that he will soon be bland again. We have a comfortable feeling, you and I, that there is nothing of HARRY SIMS in us.*)

This humour we discuss is in the dryness of the stage directions which leave 'The Gov.' alone at the end of the glorious third Act of *Crichton*. (It is as good a thing, I may say, better even, to read a Barrie play with its wealth of direction, untapped and unguessed by the fellow in front, as it is to see it.)

'There is none to salute him now (says the book) unless we do it.'

As I am with the *Crichton* directions I may mention the Barrie humour which describes the Earl of Loam:

'As a widower he is at least able to interfere in the domestic concerns of his house—to rummage in the drawers, so to speak, for which he has felt an itching all his blameless life; his philanthropy has opened quite a number of other drawers to him; and his advanced ideas have blown out his

figure. He takes in all the weightiest monthly reviews, and prefers those that are uncut, because he perhaps never looks better than when cutting them; but he does not read them, and save for the cutting it would suit him as well merely to take in the covers. He writes letters to the papers, which are printed in a type to scale with himself, and he is very jealous of those other correspondents who get his type.'

And again (to the dictation of the Honourable Ernest Woolley as to the feared loss of his Lordship in the wreck, fears which are, of course, happily unjustified):

ERNEST. —succeeded in reaching this island, with the loss of only one of our party, namely, Lord Loam, who flung away his life in a gallant attempt to save a servant who had fallen overboard.

*(The ladies have wept long and sore for their father, but there is something in this last utterance that makes them look up.)*

AGATHA. But, Ernest, it was Crichton who jumped overboard trying to save father.

ERNEST (*with the candour that is one of his most engaging qualities*). Well, you know, it was rather silly of uncle to fling away his life by trying to get into the boat first; and as this document may be printed in the English papers, it struck me, an English peer, you know——

LADY MARY (*every inch an English peer's daughter*). Ernest, that is very thoughtful of you.

And you will find this essence which I, as others,

have called the Barrie humour even in that masterpiece of macabre Grand Guignol, *Shall we Join the Ladies?* Here is a little play wherein is an echo of *Dear Brutus*, since the butler, Dolphin, might have been Matey, and indeed his cherubic little old master, Mr. Sam Smith, might have been Lob—except that we never enter Sam's drawing-room and we do enter Lob's wood. It has been said that the author intended to make a full-length play of this one-scene thriller. But this is all a part of the Barrie humour; he could in artistry have meant no such thing. And the dreadful horror of his grotesque *Curtain* is just what was wanted to give a pleasurable chill to the enchanted first-nighters who, among them the Prince of Wales, saw its production on a hot night in the summer of 1921.

The caste was an 'all star one.' And I recall with gratitude Sir Charles Hawtrey's (in the part of Preen) approach to a liqueur brandy. The directions, in the Barrie "manner, which Sir Charles followed so amusingly, run:

'Mr. Preen in his wanderings towards the side-board encounters a very large glass and a small bottle of brandy. He introduces them to each other. He swirls the contents in the glass as if hopeful that it may climb the rim and so escape without his having to drink it. This is a trick which has become so common with him that when

lost in thought he sometimes goes through the motion though there is no glass in his hand.'

I cannot say whether or no its author had any special affection for this dazzling bit of nonsense, but the wit with which he lays each of Sam Smith's dinner-guests, man or woman, under great suspicion of the murder of Sam's brother is so consummate that I feel he must surely have had a soft spot in his heart for this most engaging entertainment.

Most artists, I imagine, have some favourite among their chickens, and it is not always the one that cackles the most. It is on record that Robert Louis Stevenson declared that had he himself written nothing other than *Thrawn Janet* he should still claim a place in letters.

Whether Sir James Barrie received his O.M. on account of *Shall we Join the Ladies?* I do not know. It is improbable that he did. Yet he showed himself deserving thereby. One of his dozen guests is clearly guilty? Which? The riddle is insoluble and fascinating, but as no one could answer it except, possibly, Sir James Barrie, it seems hardly worth while to speculate as to a solution. Did I speculate, I should be a little inclined to name Miss Vaile. One is left wondering. Queen Mary herself, who demanded the answer from the author, was left wondering.

A critic of the play has, I see, compared the

## CHAPTER IX

NOT long ago I spoke with the publisher of a classic book of childhood. By which I infer that the classic in question was for children and not about children to give pleasure and amusement to parents, pastors, masters and the grown-up public generally. I asked this bookman if his friend, the author (deceased), had been fond of children, and he replied that that eminent fellow had 'hated the little beasts,' which was probably untrue.

I do not think that the same thing, even in jest, could be said of Sir James Barrie, since, to judge a man by his works, he was surely incapable of 'hating' any one. At the same time it seems certain that he has written 'nothing which is entirely to the address of childhood.

*Peter Pan* yearly delights its thousands of audience, and among the same are a large percentage of children. But *Peter* was written to indulge a whim of the author's own heart (he says that the spark of Peter was born of rubbing five young friends violently together), and not to indulge that of some beloved small thing. And





NINA BOUCICAULT AND HILDA TREVELYAN  
as Peter and Wendy in the original production of 'Peter Pan'



I expect (since boyhood alters little, I think) that did I at Christmas-time offer some healthy and hearty boy or girl the choice between *Peter Pan* or the Circus, or even the old-fashioned pantomime (festival of the very young), the choice would not fall on *Peter*. Ask the same of some young person, say between the ages of fifteen and eighteen, and I fancy the majority would vote for *Peter*. For he is really as permanent as Pan, only one must have grown a little above the barbarian stage, in which we are born, to hear his pipe and recognise his permanency.

*Peter* arose of *The Little White Bird*, which is a fantasy book; he may even have been a figment of the fantastic brain of Tommy Sandys, who contemplated the character of a boy who disliked the thought of growing up. Few children understand the beauty of the fantastic. Almost does *Peter's* creator bear me out. He favoured a boy-child with a seat in the author's box for the first performance. Later he was injudicious enough to enquire which part of the evening his guest had most enjoyed. Then was he laid low. 'What I liked best,' said Boyhood, 'was tearing up the programme and dropping the bits on the people's heads.'

At the rehearsals of *Peter* a depressed man in overalls (who might have been the theatre ghost) would appear (carrying a paint-pot or a mug of

tea) at the author's elbow in the shadowy stalls. He would murmur 'The gallery boys won't stand it,' and then vanish. This, though the event proved the speaker wrong, is but an exaggeration of what I have just said.

What is after the hearts of children is the utterly absurd or else the swinging bloodthirstiness of *The Lays of Ancient Rome*. Think for a moment of those two beautiful books of childhood, Kenneth Grahame's *Golden Age* and his *Dream Days*. No child knows them by heart. But *The Wind in the Willows*, with its supreme absurdity of the impossibly behaving Toad and Rat, is the beloved of the child who usually has it by rote. He loves it because of its sheer nonsense and in spite of the great beauty of certain of its passages. He loves it also because the author has written with Gargantuan enthusiasm of food. Childhood demands always its literary bread and circuses.

But it must be remembered that *The Wind in the Willows* had its genesis, as had *Alice*, in a story told to a small boy, an actual bed-time story. It has not an ounce of sentiment to it, and, whatever a young child may pretend to please you, sentiment is unconvincing to him—indeed, sentiment makes him slightly uncomfortable, though I doubt if he recognises the cause of his conscious discomfort.

In the same sort of way a small child is made

acutely unhappy by the grief of a grown-up. This is frequently accounted to him as sympathy and sweetness. This is not so, it is sheer selfishness. He hates to have routine interfered with, and this grief and sorrow is interfering with his personal comfort. He is still, you observe, a barbarian. I once drove, I was *very* little, through Edinburgh alone with a grown woman who was crying bitterly because some one she loved had been killed in Afghanistan. I clung to her, begged her not to cry, and snivelled myself. Later she, hugging me, thanked me 'for my sympathy in the cab.' I vaguely realised even then that I had played the part of a natural little humbug and hypocrite. I have remembered to this day with shame that so falsely earned gratitude.

One knows how Barrie, the little boy, sought to dry his mother's inconsolable tears for his eldest brother dead. It has been accounted the 'most beautiful episode in a beautiful book.' But the impulse to console was probably, alas, a purely selfish one.

I can think of no one better than Barrie did I want an author able to write of children. For such a book the author must be the child and not the reader. I cannot visualise a child yelling because one ceased a reading aloud of the *Young Visitors*. I can, and have, heard an ungrateful brat howl because *The Wind in the Willows* was

at length laid down. But to the grown-up how infinitely more entertaining is the former classic than the latter, how infinitely more delightful to him are Harold, Charlotte and Selina of the *Golden Age* than the riparian Noah's Ark which brought its builder so much praise and so many ha'pence. And how infinitely he, as all artists, I imagine, must have preferred the butter to the bread!

Those who remember Barrie's words on Educational Nurseries, a treatise built on a diet of alphabetical biscuits and 'conversation sweeties' (a confection of Thrums which I have not seen for long years), may remember his latter-day criticism of himself and his nurseries:

'I am sure Anon was never in an Educational Nursery, indeed though I knit my brows in thought I cannot recall his having in those days ever been in a nursery at all. He never had a nursery himself, I don't believe that the most genteel friend of his childhood ever had a nursery; it seems to me, looking back, that he was riotously happy without nurseries, without even a nana (but with some one better) to kiss the place when he bumped. The children of six he had met were, if boys, helping their father to pit the potatoes, and if girls, they were nurses (without knowing the word) to some one smaller than themselves. He came of parents who could not

afford nurseries, but who could by dint of struggle send their daughters to boarding-schools and their sons to universities.

‘Perhaps Anon did meet in London some children of the nurseries, and found with surprise what care had to be taken of them at six years of age; that, for instance, there needed to be a tall fender to prevent their falling into the fire. Such children were something new in the world to him. Perhaps he studied them closely, perhaps just sufficiently to rip an article out of them. He may have made a call and his hostess instructed the nurse to carry the eldest down very carefully so that the visitor might be gazed at with safety. On the other hand this article may have been evolved out of Anon’s seeing an alphabetical biscuit in a shop-window.

‘Heigho, so long it is since I had a “way” with children.’ I remember more vividly than most things the day I first knew it was gone. The blow was struck by a little girl, with whom I had the smallest acquaintance, but I was doing my best to entertain her when suddenly I saw upon her face the look that means, “You are done with all this, my friend.” It is the cruellest, most candid look that ever comes into the face of a child. I had to accept it as final, though I swear I had a way with them once. That was among the most rueful days of my life.’

Barrie seems to admit in the above that he fails to please the nursery reader, but how infinitely more practical a thing it is to please the reader 'who reads of the nursery!

*Peter*, in book or play, is surely absurd enough to have been a nursery favourite rather than a favourite of the later schoolroom. The beautiful pathos of *Peter* outweighs for nursery use the charm of the impossible, even the charm of pirates and Red Indians. Kingsley's Tom is, heaven knows, pathetic enough if you consider him before he became Water Baby, but the pathos is supplied so grogged with Mr. Grimes and grooms and grouse that it is forgotten and Tom is a winner all the way. 'Split my infinitives,' curses Hook enigmatically, 'Thou hold thy noise,' growls Mr. Grimes, with that simple directness which childhood must ever prefer. But Mr. Kingsley could never have charmed his grown-ups with a child as can, in a few words, Barrie who has written of Henley's little friendly daughter, she who supplied the name Wendy to *Peter*. He says that this little girl died when she was about five; 'one might call it a sudden idea which came to her in the middle of her romping.' Such a whimsy as this, such a potential danger to a romp, would make the ordinary nursery feel uncomfortable and self-conscious.

But it is when Gavinia nibbles dreamily at a



hot sweet-smelling 'bridie' whose gravy oozes through the paper bag that we understand and know. We, when we are 'youth and joy and little birds broken out of the egg,' do not understand what Peter, claiming to be as we are, means. It makes us self-conscious, that uncomfortable thing. Nor do we understand when a little boy, Micah Daw by name, no better than ourselves (rather worse indeed since he ignores the example of Ananias), offers the young lady—Babbie—his rabbit if she will cease to set her cap at the bachelor parish priest, Mr. Dishart.

• “‘I’ll gie you my rabbit,” Micah said, “if you’ll gang awa. I’ve just the ane.” She shook her head, and, misunderstanding her, he cried, with his knuckles in his eye, “I’ll gie you them baith, though I’m sweer to part wi’ Spotty!””

But Micah pleases grown-ups mightily. Yet we understand nicely enough does Mr. Pym, excellent fellow, say: ‘I read when I’m eating and I spill so much gravy that—that we boil my waistcoat once a month and make soup of it.’

‘What is genius?’ asks Tommy Sandys, and he declares genius to be the power to be a boy again at will. This genius is no doubt one of the several sorts which Barrie possesses, for his fame does not rest on one genius alone, nor on one book, nor on one play. He is the child who writes for the man; rarely, rarely is he the man who writes for

the child. He can, with the natural disregard of a boy of his period, see a cat killed or a pig stuck in the hateful old fashion. Yet he, while he remains the boy, has a sympathy with boyhood which the boy in actual years would not have thought to possess. It comes as natural to him to see a boy drop from a tree as to see an apple fall.

His *Views of a School Boy*, a series which ran in the *St. James's Gazette*, was as good reading of its kind, for contemporary parents, as could be desired. His letters, as a boy, to local papers in Dumfriesshire, which (they were signed *Paterfamilias*) urged the necessity for longer school holidays, were a piece of fifth-form precocity. Though, as we have read, fifth-forms, as we know fifth-forms, were not in the young James's experience.

The Jacobite high jinks in *Sentimental Tommy* strike one as fantastic rather than fact. I cannot see a parcel of real Angus village children of a lifetime back so play-acting under the stage-management of a Tommy Sandys or even of a Barrie. The only incident in 'The Siege of Thrums' which rings naturally to youth is the thoughtless cruelty of childhood which taunts poor little Grizel as to the disposal of her mother's (The Painted Lady's) dead body. But those fine doings make merry reading all the same.

All Barrie's principal children are nice. Sometimes we like children, such as Jackanapes; sometimes we hate them, as we hate Little Lord Fauntleroy. On the whole, the Barrie children are likeable to their elders. I am, for instance, as fond as is Barrie himself of Irene, the daughter of the 'Inconsiderate Waiter' at the Club who in reality was accommodating—so accommodating that he agreed ever with the member who spoke last. His character was, we know, 'as a cheroot which may be smoked from either end.' I greatly doubt if any little girl of ten (Irene's own age) would prefer to read of Irene before a reading of Ratty. But when Irene stands in Pall Mall and signalises bulletins to her father within the Club as to the progress of her sick mother I greatly enjoy her. Especially do I enjoy her when she, in mid-Mall, indicates, by licking an imaginary plate, that the invalid had 'took all the tapiocar.' Even Irene's creator (for Irene is too good to be true) modestly admits that 'the little creature is really not without merit.'

I fear that the reader cannot enjoy the Barrie menagerie as he can the Barrie nursery. For one reason, the Barrie animals are not there in any quantity to be enjoyed. With the exception of Porthos, Solomon Caw, The Crocodile, Nana the (almost) immortal, and Peter's goat (the last a mere shadow), the lower creations of Barrie are

few and, for the most part, are lumped into groups such as 'the birds,' 'the ducks,' the 'swans,' the 'sparrows' or the 'thrushes.' Even those portentous rooks which welcomed Barrie, at St. Pancras Station, to London and letters are but generalisations, a rookery rather than a Solomon Caw.

But no author may get far in our affection with his beasts and his birds while he supplies the same in mass formation. But now and again birds supply a whimsy, in the Hans Andersen manner, the swallows for instance who, under the eaves, overhear the gossip of the nursery. There is, too, the conception of Peter's thrush-nest boat and of the glow-worm who installed himself in 'the little house' as though he was the electric light. But these graceful thoughts are not enough to win the universal popularity of the young.

There seems, moreover, a lack of conception of what is wanted to please, a crudity even, in the whim that makes Joey put the 'dear little Irish terrier dog' into the sausage-machine. It is not quite enough to know, some pages later, that, were the resultant sausages put back into the machine, were the handle then turned in reverse, the dog would appear again. It is better, for the young, if an author must play pantomime with his animals, that the end should be something prettier than sausages.

As an example of the prettiness which nursery art requires, let us remember the wreck, in the *Water Babies*, which Tom boards in his attempt to save the sleeping baby whose cot is lashed under the bulwark. From under the cot jumps, of course, the little black-and-tan terrier and tries to prevent Tom from touching the baby. In the scuffle there came a tall green sea (just such a one probably as pulled Master Harvey Cheyne overboard and away to leeward, 'Wheeling Stogie' and all) which, walking in over the weather side, swept baby and dog and Tom into the water. The water-babies, as we know, dealt with the baby forthwith. Tom, being a water-baby himself, required no assistance. 'And the poor little dog? Why, after he had kicked and coughed a little, he sneezed so hard that he sneezed himself clean out of his skin and turned into a water-dog and jumped and danced round Tom and ran over the crests of the sea, and snapped at the jelly-fish and the mackerel and followed Tom the whole way to the Other-end-of-Nowhere.'

That Barrie has failed a trifle in animal portraiture, has failed in his literary sympathy towards them, is possibly because he is essentially a townsman, a citizen of a 'beloved and lonely' London, while Kingsley and Kipling are *adscripti glebae*.

Barrie, too, has surely infinitely preferred chil-

dren to the exclusion of animals except as toys. Barrie is maybe the only great writer of childhood who has done without the animal creation. Kingsley and Kipling were lovers of childhood, but with corners of the heart where the fields were green and the hounds were running. You may be sure that Barrie has failed to satisfy in the kennel, because you never meet a dog christened in the manner of compliment, Porthos or Nana. Yet one is assured that no want of ability to express, if desired, causes this neglect. I have but to read of Porthos and the rabbit, Porthos the gentleman who is noisily hated of all small dogs by reason of his size. Indeed, on reading of the comparison between David and Porthos I am half-inclined to make a palinode, a retraction of what I have just written. But the name test, the christening of common compliment, which lacks, forbids any such weakness on my part.

It must be remembered that had Barrie not greatly loved children, to the exclusion of the lower animals, *Peter Pan* might never have been. Only of a consummate love and conception of the young could such a boy have been born. Let us be thankful for him and for his adopted family.

The actual Kenneth Grahame children owe nothing to fantasy. No children take part in *The Wind in the Willows*, a book, as we know, devoted entirely to an absurdity of beasts. That

children love this little book is inexplicable to me. The fact remains that they do love it and, through their affection for it, very many grown-up people fall also under its nameless charm.

One may say that other creators of famous children's books (which are high among books for children) hold, as does Barrie, fantasy as one of their trump cards. Messrs. Kingsley and Milne are two among this exceptional band, of whom Lewis Carroll is perhaps the most renowned.

Of all literary children, Harold is to me most dear, possibly because he is most real. Yet, running Harold close, are the golden company of Peter Pan. Harold is the offspring of a fortunate fellow who, with a life's literary output of some 200,000 words or less, made himself famous. Peter is one of the hundred creations and inspirations of a great writer who spent his life prolifically in the service of letters. Peter is his reward and our great good luck. Harold, it may be said, probably bumped into Mr. Grahame in the neighbourhood of the Bank on a day when he, the banker, was thinking of Bank Rate. I would explain the difference between the two by saying that Peter belongs to Barrie whereas Kenneth Grahame belongs to Harold. For no particular reason remains this fact: Harold is well known to most people, but Peter Pan is known to all. He is the crystallisation of Barrie, he is Barrie in a

nutshell, and he is possibly the principal, even the only, figure among the Barrie creations who is as readily recognisable to the public as is Mr. Jorrock or Mr. Pickwick.

Little Mary is tradition too, if you will, but she remains a mere anatomy. Peter is one of the three characters in fairly modern literature to stick out like hop-poles, known to all men in the street, even though, as a quotation from Shakespeare, we scarce know where they come from. Peter stands with Mowgli and Sherlock Holmes. There are other familiar figures in the works of Barrie; there is Crichton, there is Smec, there is Lob who is likewise Mr. Sam Smith. Sherlock is the only great figure in all that Conan Doyle put forth. Sherlock was a boom that has not been forgotten, but he probably exists only because of a crapulous popular craving for detective literature of which he remains the high example.

Barrie and Kipling each have two or three personalities to their credit, whom, off-hand, we know among the familiars. Stevenson has but two—John Silver and Alan Breck—of whom Silver, his crutch and his Captain Flint, is predominant. Surtees has at least four ‘fine natural blackguards,’ friends of all the world. Lewis Carroll has perhaps eight names among the household words. Thackeray, too, and Scott made those who would be recognised in the Strand to-



day. Shakespeare and Dickens have no strangers for us at all. Dickens, as Mr. Chesterton has said, conquered the world with minor characters.

It will be seen that an author may be the nearest thing to Providence which exists, since he occasionally can dip pen into ink and make life. It is something to be, as Barrie was, one of the few with a creation or so to credit, and if that creation is a child, why, so much the better is it.

Barrie is not a 'popular' writer. He has not the appeal to suburban and general affections as has a Grahame or a Milne, an appeal, it seems, which can only be made through the hearts of children. He does not call to the masses as did Dickens. He has never, as Kipling, appealed nationally. To some he is as caviare or olives. But he has the power to attract love and affection to himself. And he is appreciated by those who fall under the spell as few writers can have been appreciated and as, I would say, indeed, never another playwright has been appreciated since the days when Puck first bobbed up in that 'wood near Athens,' since Mr. Justice Shallow wished himself young again for the sake of bonny Mistress Anne.

When I consider Barrie as a writer for or of childhood I am reminded by some cantrip of Barrie himself, the little boy in the windy, deserted show-ground at Glasgow looking in the mild night for his lost bawbee. So may he have,

in the faith of a child, assiduously sought his inspirations throughout life. And so beloved has he been by his attendant sprites (or possibly so assiduously has he searched) that he has seldom in the end failed to find the surprising and fairy reward, the reward which exceeded his hopes by fourfold, the silver fourpenny lucky piece, the improbable in place of the possible—a treasure which it is only fair to say he has squandered on his audiences, the big and the little, the young and the old.

## CHAPTER X

THE name Barrie, of Thrums, as surely as that of Thomas of Erceldoune, must to many connect itself with that land of Youth which is vaguely known to the man in the street, the child in the nursery, as Fairyland. The Barrie inclination to islands is but a part of the Barrie taste in Tinnan-Ogues. Barrie's books and plays are rich in islands. So is fairyland an archipelago of a place wherein may be named the Hesperides, St. Brandon's Land of Behest, Merlin's Isle of Hy-Brazil, lovely Calypso's magic atoll cocking up out of peacock waters, Arthur's Isle of Avalon, Cuchulin, the soldier-sportsman's Island of Forgetfulness and, if you like, the 'pleasant isle of Aves.' Even you may say that Atlantis the Lost is an island whose painted headlands may be seen to-day do you stand on the coast of Connemara on a blue afternoon and look seaward into a magic of summer weather, pearl-pink sea-mist and purple ocean. Surely to our archipelago has lately been added another isle—that little dangerous island that 'likes to be visited'? There, as in all fairylands, time magically lapses. The isle of Mary

Rose, rising among the misty Hebrides at the invocation of James Barrie, is, though a comparative newcomer to the archipelago, as welcome there as ever the isle of Prospero, the contribution to Faerie of another playwright.

One might say (without, I hope, being accused of plagiarising the classic, if prejudiced, comparison 'whaur's your Wullie Shakespeare noo?') that William Shakespeare and James Barrie are the only two British playwrights who have added an island to fairyland and created for us and for all time a fairy or so. No one knows better than these two that a proper fairyland must be an island, a place of 'yellow sands,' a place with something to it of the joy and the sadness of the sea. Yet each can make also a very good inland fairyland: the Elizabethan selects, and takes us journeying to, a wood near Athens; the Edwardian calls his magic wood up to the drawing-room windows of a house in England, the house of Lob.

But fairyland may, of course, be anywhere that a man chooses. One touch of the unnatural, moreover, makes all the world akin, since an inborn belief in fairies is a common one which extends from Skye to Mandalay, from Connemara to Khatmandu.

Shakespeare took his fairies from the recognised sources. Oberon came of the French *chanson de geste* of Sir Huon of Babylon and Bordeaux;

Oberon is the dwarf, the handsome herald, who conducted Sir Huon to Fairyland and the arms of the Lady Esclarmonde. Shakespeare wedded Oberon to Titania (or the Greek Diana) and set the pair to reign in Elfland. Shakespeare took the Celtic Phooka, a prince of misrule, and made him Puck for all time—and for Mr. Kipling, three hundred years afterwards, to establish firmly in Sussex. Barrie took Quean Mab (for she is no Queen but only a quean or wench—a sort of Amaryllis I think), who was the fairy midwife of Shakespeare, and called her Miss Logan and sent her to attend the labour of Joanna Routh. He also showed her to be of human size, wherein he showed also his knowledge in Faerie, since fairies proper, being the followers of Lucifer, Gregara outlawed from Paradise, are as tall as you and I. It is typical of the Barrie whimsy that he should make a fairy act the 'howdy' to a human wife. Folklore, in all lands, is abundant in the reverse of this. We find it from Beddgelert to Japan. The human midwife is called for by the fairies. She assists at the birth of a fairy babe to a fairy dame and, suitably rewarded, she is returned to her home, where she lives happily ever after.

Shakespeare has one fairy of his own invention, Ariel, and a very good fairy he is. Barrie has his original Peter Pan, and Peter is as good as Ariel any day. Barrie fairies, since Barrie is an opti-

mist, are of the happier sort. Miss Rossetti goes to Goblin Market and tells otherwise. Shakespeare hints at the darker side to fairyland. Granted, if you will, that witches are not fairies, and ruling out, therefore, the witches in *Macbeth*, we find the child Mamillius, anxious as ever was the Fat Boy, to make our flesh to creep:

A sad tale's best for winter:

I have one of sprites and goblins.

HERMIONE. Let's have that, good sir.

Come on, sit down: Come on and do your best

To fright me with your sprites; you're powerful at it.

Barrie has had nothing to say to such terrifying hobgoblins as these. No witches and wizards for him, no great trolls and giants to roar out, 'Hiv! How! Hoagraich! It is a drink of thy blood that quenches my thirst this night!' The mischievous island of Mary Rose does its mischief 'off'; and, indeed, the only latitude that Barrie allows himself in the matter of mischief 'on' is the latitude of Lob and his Puckish magic.

The origin of fairy-tale is, likely enough, the Greek mythology of which most world-myths are born. The frequent sojourning of a mortal in Faerie, that most sorrowful journey, for a lesser time or a greater, is but the story of Persephone over again; or more likely the story of Eurydice, since, again and again, in all lands the visitor to Tir-nan-Ogue, be he True Thomas, be she Hogg's

bonnie Kilmeny, be she Barrie's Mary Rose, can only return to earth if no word is spoken by rescued or rescuer on the homeward stage. The anointing of the eyes with fairy clay to give a mortal maid sight to see things which (as Kilmeny again, as Mary Rose) 'she might not declare' is either founded on a New Testament incident or else that incident is founded on the folk-lore which is older than Bethlehem.

Kipling, who knows his fairyland reasonably well, laughs, in the person of his deep-mouthed Puck, at the conventional nursery fairy, 'the sugar-and-shake-your-head impostor,' which is, of course, the tiny being, winged as a Psyche, beloved of Conan Doyle, which rides the dragon-fly, which perches on the mushroom, which sips the early dewdrop on the summer grass, but who could no more set off 'from Tintagel to Hy-Brazil in the teeth of a sou'westerly gale' than could a blue butterfly.

But to nursery convention Barrie has made the concession which he calls Tinker Bell and which most of us visualise as one of the little creatures to which Puck takes exception. Barrie says that Tinker was born of the dancing reflection of a hand-lantern among the leaves of a wood where he, in the company of children, walked on a short June night. I have another theory of the inception of Tinker. I imagine her to have been inspired,

in the first instance, by one of the small psychic spot-lights to be seen, as no doubt Barrie had seen, darting hither and thither. The first time that such a phenomenon was mine to see, I wondered of whom I was instantly put in mind, and at once knew that it was of Tinker Bell, Tinker Bell who was the control of Peter Pan.

Fairies will survive in literature whether we believe in them or no. They, or the myths which made them, are surely the beginnings of Man's imagining. They can no more perish than can the Nine Muses or the Cyprian's self. They have no bond of race. They range in size from the giant killed by Jack or by Sir Lohot (and claimed by the coward Sir Kay) to such airy trifles as Peaseblossom or Tinker Bell. And as usual, though we applaud when Peter puts the question to us as to our belief, we believe, do we believe at all, in the medium or stock-size fairies such as are the Oreads or such as are those of the secret commonwealth who met Kilmeny in the rushy glen or who called so paramountly to Mary Rose. These fairies are the echoes of ourselves and made in God's image, which the floppity-pop white-night-gowned Kensal Green angels surely are not.

I wish that I could claim, for the purposes of this book, that the home of fairy-tale, in Britain, is in the Thrums country. It is not; it is in the Western Highlands and Islands (such as the one



that liked being visited), it is in the Ossianic lands of legend and fable. But in Thrums and its neighbourhood there would be, even as recently as when Barrie was a boy, the journeyman tailors and 'sutors'—shoemakers are ever fond of fairies—going from house to house, picking up and passing on anecdote and so making a winter night's amusement and tale. When such a stranger came to Thrums there would be a gathering to listen to his stories. It was the custom for the host to set the ball a-rolling. It was a proverb almost that the good man told the first tale and that the guest must then keep it up till daylight. James Barrie, the boy, must often have listened, large-eyed, to the tales of Earl Beardie and other local heroes, to tales of the 'ghoulics and ghosties' of Glamis and of those local 'lang-leggity beasties' and things that 'gang bump i' the nicht.' And who shall know just how much such *gestes* reacted in the retentive brain of the boy, the playwright-to-be?

Thus fairy-tale, in the beginning, began, and it is not too much to say that thus literature began. Homer, we know, had heard men sing by land and sea, otherwise he had lacked for inspiration. So it was with Shakespeare no doubt, so with Ben Jonson, Hogg and Barrie. But only Shakespeare and Barrie got their fays over the footlights.

There are those who can do without fairies, I

have met those who could do without Peter Pan. Shakespeare himself was subject to a jaundiced and materialist criticism. Says that otherwise sound man, Mr. Samuel Pepys, of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: 'the most insipid, ridiculous play that ever I did see.'

Miss Julie is one sort of fairy and Peter Pan is another. Each is of the *truer* kind. Miss Julie cannot cross running water any more than Tam o' Shanter's Nannie could cross the Brig o' Doon. But Peter is as Puck, cold iron is as naught to him when a Pirate must perish; and as for running water, there is a flow to our old friend the Serpentine, perhaps not so lively a flow as that of the Branders Burn, but nevertheless a flow within legal terminology, which Peter Pan can cross in a bird's nest.

Puck, he of Pook's Hill, explains this immunity from fairy tradition in the two words, 'I'm Puck.' And Peter might well explain his own unconvention in a similar simplicity of briefness.

I am ready to believe in Peter, who is Puck; I am ready to believe in Miss Logan. I understand that no child believes in fairies after he has caught out a grown-up in masquerade as Santa Claus, all red dressing-gown and white cotton-wool whiskers. In 1899 such an impostor was hailed as 'Krooger'; to-day who shall say what comparison he will draw upon himself?

Shakespeare and Barrie are the two magicians who, on the English stage, have 'broken the Hills,' have unbarred the magic casement, they and no others. Let us be thankful to both, since, though most of us have lost our fairylands, we would all regain them did the opportunity serve.

None know of Shakespeare's youth and if he met fairyland o' some of his shiny nights in Charlcote Park, Warwickshire. Barrie's youth is well known to us. It was a period of strict thrift in an atmosphere of strict religion coupled with the teachings of Gladstone and Carlyle. There is nothing to *show* of fairyland before the Kensington Gardens days were come. But Barrie, he a child blirstling in the ingle, would surely, as we know, have *heard* something of it told by itinerant story-tellers on the black, age-long winter nights of Angus between the unyoking and the yoking-to. Then and there the seeds doubtless were sown which were eventually to grow the apples of the Hesperides for the delight of a London public and to the greater and eternal glory of Kirriemuir.









